

# TEEVADHARA

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## RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH

CRISIS IN THE RENEWAL

*Xavier Koodapuzha*

TOWARDS RENEWAL IN RELIGIOUS LIFE

*John B. Chethimattam*

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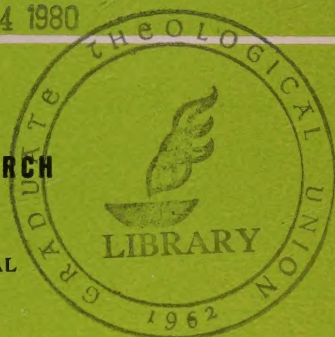
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BOOK REVIEW



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To the Memory of  
**COLIN ANTONY SHEPPARD**

who was  
the Literary Editor  
of

*Jeevadhara*

from its start till his death

on 11 May 1979

this issue is gratefully dedicated.



# JEEVADHARA

## The People of God

**RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH**

Editor:

**Xavier Koodapuzha**

Theology Centre  
Kottayam - 686 017  
Kerala, India



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# Editorial

RENEWAL is the theme of this issue of *Jeevadhara* and the articles attempt to highlight some of the problems and prospects of the 'Renewal of the Church'. Though the process of renewal has been an essential feature of the Church, it has engaged greater attention only with the Vatican II. Pope John XXIII of Happy Memory, while revealing to the world on 25th January 1959 his intention to convoke an ecumenical council, pointed out that it was designed for the genuine renewal of the Church and meant to promote ecumenism.

The Vatican II was indeed a historic event in the history of the Church. Fourteen years have gone by after its happy conclusion on the 8th of December 1965. This post-conciliar period has witnessed various attempts to renew the life of the Church on various levels. Though the Church is holy in her origin and mission, it consists of people who are sinners. The Church becomes worthy of its name in proportion to her earnestness and zeal to follow the teaching of Jesus. The Spirit of Christ is always the sustaining principle maintaining her fidelity to the Lord.

The Church has a societal aspect and, just like any other society, it is influenced by the socio-political cultural vicissitudes of the time. The leadership in the Church has a key role to keep the people always mindful of the evangelical ideals. It is a sociological truth that any organization will thrive under genuine leadership and will get weakened and confused under poor guidance. The same principle is valid as regards the Church also. The history of the Church provides ample evidence of this fact.

This issue of *Jeevadhara* opens with Xavier Koodapuzha's article on some of the general aspects and problems of the renewal of the Church. In the article which follows it, J. B.

Chethimattam focusses attention on the problem of renewal with special reference to the Religious life. The Religious who follow the evangelical way of life have a great prophetic role in the renewal of the Church. Nihal Abeyasingha tries to analyse the problems of renewal with special reference to the Indian context. In the next article William Madtha points out the layman's view of the renewal. The importance of freedom for constructive criticism and the need for qualifying the lay leadership is specially pointed out. Thomas Vellilamthadam shows that the social doctrine of the Church has not appreciably changed into an effective social praxis because the structures of both the Church and the Society have not been transformed. Finally, J. B. Chethimattam makes a survey of our achievements during the fourteen years after Vatican II.

The problem of renewal is a complex question. It has many dimensions which are inter-related. Hence an integral approach is necessary for a real renewal. The Church needs continuous reform and its success depends on her deep awareness of its need. The human element of the Church is subject to temptations but the Spirit is ever operative in her to overcome it. The history of the Church teaches us how the failure to reform would deform the true image of the Church. The movement for renewal has become a reality in the post-Vatican period.

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Xavier Koodapuzha



# Crisis in the Renewal

## 1. Renewal of the Church

The process of renewal is inherent in the very life of the Church. God became man to renew humanity and the Church is entrusted with the dynamic mission of continuing it. The Spirit of Christ given to the Church is the driving force behind every genuine renewal.

This need for renewal acquired a new momentum on the Church with the Vatican II. This Council was convoked for renewal and reunion. For some time Catholic theology had seemed to a certain extent impervious to change. It was quite visible in ecclesiology. It had developed into a defensive system to withstand any possible attack. On the contrary, the mission of the Church is not to develop a defensive system but to diffuse the newness of the Gospel among the whole human family.

Renewal is not a discovery but a return to the genuine sources, which demands a transformation in life.<sup>1</sup> The gospel demands a constant conversion or metanoia and a reorientation according to its teaching. The Kingdom of God is to be realized by the openness to His Word.

The New Testament and the history of the Church reveal how the Church is composed of sinful men with many limitations. The grace and mercy of God is the only sustaining force. Hence the Church is *ecclesia semper reformanda*. The process of deformation and reformation constitutes the history of the Church. It is indeed a revealing truth that most of the

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1) Cfr. H. U. von Balthasar, *Schleifung der Bastioueu*, Eise-  
edeln 1952 and Yves Congar, *Vraie et fausse reforme dans*  
*l'Eglise*, Paris, 1954. H. Küng, *The Council and Reunion*, London  
and New York 1961.

movements which resulted in schism or heresy are linked with enthusiastic attempts to reform the Church. These movements when they are cut off from the genuine sources become sectarian attempts to destroy the unity of the Church.<sup>2</sup> The ancient as well as modern heresies have the same story to tell us. Montanism, Donatism, Priscillianism, Waldensianism, Protestantism, Puritanism, Pietism etc. are all enthusiastic attempts for reform which resulted in disastrous divisions!

The various Councils in the Church, local, provincial, national or ecumenical were convened to reform the Church. The Religious orders which came into existence in the course of centuries were founded by men with profound religious experience who felt the urgency to renew the Church after the values of the gospel. Who can ignore the great monks of the Eastern Churches who laid the foundation for Christian monasticism?<sup>3</sup>

“Christian discipleship demands renewal of life.” “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come.”<sup>4</sup> A man guided by the Spirit constantly follows the path of renewal. “Though our outer nature is wasting away our inner nature is being renewed every day.”<sup>5</sup> The Apostle points out that the ecclesial renewal is not an external opportunistic conformism or adjustment but a radical conversion of mind and heart to God. “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”<sup>6</sup> The renewal of the Church is not to be considered as a momentary enthusiasm but an ever sustaining and inspiring force drawn from the gospel. The source of this reform is the Lord of the Church. Hence when a Church is not open to renewal it is not worthy of its name as it lacks openness to its very source of life.

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2) H. Kung, *The Church*, New York, 1976, pp. 434-437

3) Cfr. K. Bihlmeyer & H. Tuchle, *Church History*, Westminster 1958, pp. 357-371.

4) II Cor. 5: 17

5) II Cor. 4: 16

6) Rom. 12: 2

Renewal is not merely a restoration. It does not simply restore the state of affairs in their pristine form. There is the element of continuity and also of growth. It should be an organic development. We call it organic in the sense that it is not an artificial addition but a growth and development from and according to its own inner nature. The Church has its deep roots in the apostolic foundations and it has to be always faithful to the original source upon which it has grown. The Church becomes credible in proportion to its fidelity to the original source, the apostolic community. The concrete guide is the apostolic Church. The Christ-experience of the apostles is the living foundation and ever-inspiring source of the Church. The apostles were the authentic interpreters who were divinely commissioned by Christ. They set the standard in various places and thus the apostolic churches came into existence. *This apostolic heritage has a normative and constitutive value for the whole church.* The Churches of the later centuries have to conform themselves to the apostolic foundations.

Vatican II which was convoked for renewal reminds us about the principle of renewal. "Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way to that continual reformation of which she always had need in so far as she is an institution of men here on earth."<sup>7</sup> "The Church...is at the same time holy and always in need of being purified (*semper purificanda*), and incessantly pursues the path of penance and renewal."<sup>8</sup>

## 2. The holy and sinful Church

The Church is holy because God is holy. Her holiness does not come from her members but from the ever-sustaining principle, the grace of God. God is faithful in his promise and no amount of human weakness can ruin the Church. She exists not because of her visible leaders but because of the divine assistance guaranteed to her. "Lo I am with you always, to the close of the age."<sup>9</sup> Hence no human force inside or outside

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7) Decree on Ecumenism, No. 6

8) Constitution on the Church No. 8

9) Mt. 28, 20



the Church can destroy her. History of the Church provides us with ample evidences and instances where her members of all ranks have shown abundant examples of human weakness.

The Holy Spirit is the source of the renewal of the Church. The Spirit keeps her alive and renewed. The successes and failures of renewal are in proportion to her fidelity to the promptings of the Spirit which is the abiding principle of life in her. In her members she may grow weak and lukewarm, get wounded and shaken, but her foundation is strong and life indestructible. God will always keep his Church holy and will never leave her wounded at the wayside. She has to march along the way which her Bridegroom has shown and her pilgrimage will continue through the ages till the end of time.

### Historical background of the renewal

Student of Ecclesiology and History of the Church are aware of the new vision of the Church envisaged by Vatican II. This new development has a remote past with far reaching roots in history. Hence a brief historical survey may be useful to understand the deep implications of the renewal.

Certain stages can be noticed in the structural evolution of the Church.<sup>10</sup> The persecuted Church of the first three centuries became a privileged community! In the beginning to become a Christian was a capital crime. But the persecuted Church was able to develop an intense ecclesial life. The different offices in the ecclesial community did not mean any class distinction but were functions inspired by the same Spirit. But the tide turned when the Church became the official religion of the Roman empire. Yves Congar remarks: "The clergy were given important privileges, the Bishops became *illustri*, and for all practical purposes ranked with the senators. They were invested with public authority within the framework of the empire, even in the sphere of secular life of the cities.... The Bishops frequently called on the imperial authority for support.... Under these circumstances, we ought perhaps to

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10) Cfr. article by X. Koodapuzha, The structural evolution in the Church, *Jeevadhara*, 1971 No. 4 pp. 315-332



expect that authority would change its character and that it would acquire a more secular, much more juridical meaning, based simply on the relation of superior to subordinate.<sup>11</sup> Following the administrative pattern of the Roman Empire the territorial jurisdictional system was introduced into the Church. The provincial, regional and national administrative became the ecclesiastical centres as well.... The title of the Bishops also varied on the basis of their administrative importance! It starts with the chorepiscopus (villages), Bishops (towns), Metropolitans (big towns) and Patriarchs (provincial or regional capitals of the Roman empire).

Generous donations from Emperors and wealthy men made the papacy very rich. This extensive territory began to be known as the Patrimony of St. Peter. The gradually growing leadership of the Pope reached a decisive stage with the political alliance with the Franks. In 754 Pope Stephen II signed a political alliance with the Franks, by which the Pope was officially acknowledged the king of central Italy.<sup>12</sup> It marks the beginning of a series of events in which the Popes had to play not only a religious role but also a political one.

### Process of centralization

During the first millennium the different local Churches especially those of the East had developed a kind of practical autonomy. It was the natural and organic development of their ecclesial life. But with the growing political importance of Papacy the process of centralization became quite vigorous. It was also a golden age of canon law while the genuine ecclesial life was on the decline. The centralizing process widened the gap between the Eastern and Western Churches. The conflict between the Papacy and the Patriarch of Constantinople reached its climax in 1054.<sup>13</sup> Towards the end of the 13th century Pope Boniface

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11) Yves Congar, Historical development of authority, in *The Problems of Authority* ed. by J. M. Todd, London 1964, p. 128

12) Neil & Schandt, *History of the Catholic Church*, Milwaukee, 1957 pp. 134-48,

13) *Ibid.* p. 189

VIII began to claim that Papacy had set up the Patriarchates, the dignity of the Metropolitans, and the sees of the Metropolitans and the sees of the Bishops.<sup>14</sup>

The separation between the East and West paved the way for the unilateral developments both in the East and in the West. The Roman canonical centralization continued unobstructed. Roman curia became the highest administrative centre of all the Churches which had communion with Papacy. In the 16th century the Council of Trent was preoccupied with the problem of formulating the Catholic position against the Protestants. There are historians who argue that the Protestant revolt would not have acquired such a momentum if the fifth Lateran Council which was convoked for the renewal of the Church had succeeded in playing its role effectively.<sup>15</sup> The French Revolution and the subsequent Secularist movement challenged the leadership of the Church in the spheres of man's fundamental rights! It was such a situation that the Vatican I was convoked by Pius IX, in 1896, to strengthen the Papacy against the secularist and liberal onslaught. But the Council could discuss only four out of the fifteen chapters as the Franco-Prussian war broke out and the Council was abruptly ended. The doctrine of Primacy and infallibility were defined while the other aspects of ecclesial life were left untouched. This too paved the way for a unilateral ecclesiology based on western medieval traditions. Numerous problems of renewal became quite acute and challenges of the time were manifold, so Pope John XXIII convoked the Vatican II with the specific purpose of renewing the Church. All the documents of Vatican II are motivated by this zeal for renewal. But the years after the Council do not seem to have convinced the Christian world that the decisions of the Council have been effectively implemented.

### 3. An increasing awareness of the nature and mission of the Church

a) The theology of the Mystical body has largely influenced the ecclesial renewal. The theologians Mohler and

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14) Raynaldi, *Annales Eccl. ad annum* 1298, No. 20

15) Neil & Scmandt op. cit. p. 295

Scheeben are generally considered the pioneers of the movement of the theology of the Mystical Body. Their successors Romano Guardini, Karl Adam, Michael Schmaus and E. Mersch were moving along this line of thinking. It opened new horizons in the understanding of the Church.

This new trend in theology had to face strong criticism. What is the meaning of the word Mystical? Will it not lead to the Protestant idea of invisible community of the just? Consequently the treatise on the Church included two sections, dealing with the societal nature and the internal reality respectively. There was a serious objection that ecclesiology should not be confused with Christology. Ecclesiology should deal with the societal aspects while Christology should be about the internal relation with Christ.

Other objections were gradually raised to the idea of the Church as identified with the Mystical Body. What is the limit of this Church? Is it wider than the visible frontiers of the Catholic Church? If the Church is an organism of grace how can the human weakness and sin coincide with the glorious concept of the mystical body? According to the Encyclical Mystical Body of Christ of Pius XII the Mystical Body is identical with the Catholic Church. In the encyclical Pius XII corrected the biological concept of the Church by asserting the freedom and individuality of the persons in the Church. The Mystical Body should not be identified with a living organism.

#### *b) Church is the People of God*

The concept of the Mystical Body needed to be complemented by other concepts. The Patristic and scriptural studies led to the concept of the People of God. Ekklesia constitutes the new people of God. The *qahal Yahweh* were the Jewish people. The early Christian community had the intense spiritual experience and feeling that they were the People gathered by Jesus Christ according to the New Covenant. In I. Pet 2:5,9-10; II Cor. 6:16 the new People gathered by Christ represent the original people of Israel gathered by Jahweh. The concept of the people of God brings out the communitarian aspect as well as the fundamental principle of Christian brotherhood. The special vocation of this messianic community and

their collective mission are emphasized. In I Pet 2: 5-9 the hearers are made profoundly aware of the fact how they were made a new people led by the Spirit of God. The Spirit which was given on the day of Pentecost continues to be their dynamic force.

The people of God are a pilgrim people on their march to the Lord of creation. They are still on pilgrimage and not yet in possession of glory. Hence the Church on earth had no right to be triumphalistic as it is subject to defect and is tarnished by time.<sup>16</sup> The human element in the Church involves sin, error and weakness. The spirit of penance and reform keep her on her path of pilgrimage and she has no right to linger on the way being satisfied with what she is already. She faces the realities of life which involve aspects of joy and glory and sorrow and shame. The triumphant Lord sustains her dynamism and faith.

### c) *Eucharistic ecclesiology*

It is Christ's death and resurrection which constituted the new people into being. St. Paul associates the blessed eucharist with the idea of the Church: "The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for all partake of the one bread".<sup>17</sup> The eucharist has a central role in shaping the ecclesial body. Christ who sacrificed himself is now living and the eucharistic body unites the ecclesial body. His body is given for others and his blood is poured out for others.<sup>18</sup> This is the new covenant. By eating Christ's body we become the body of Christ. It is in the eucharistic celebration the ekklesia actualizes itself in the highest degree. The community is gathered before the altar and the risen body of Christ unites the people of all the local churches into the body of Christ. The eucharist gathers the people into a visible community and unites in the body of the risen Christ. The eucharistic communities constitute the Body of Christ.

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16) In the Encyclical: *Redemptor Hominis* of John Paul II, no. 4 the dangers of the triumphalistic attitude are pointed out.

17) I Cor. 10, 16-17

18) Lk 22, 19 f.



In the biblical and patristic usage the Church is described as the body of Christ in connection with the eucharistic body. The intimate relation between the Church and eucharist was always maintained. The eucharist began to be called *corpus Christi verum* while the *Church corpus mysticum*. According to the biblical and patristic tradition *eucharist is the creative centre of the Church*. Wherever the eucharist is genuinely celebrated there is the body of Christ. Baptism is also another link which integrates the people to the body of Christ.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. Theological development leading to *Lumen Gentium*

The document of *Lumen Gentium* is the result of a long process of theological development. One of the great achievements of Vatican II is that it did not identify itself with any particular theological or philosophical system. It respects the genuine developments in the various fields both secular and religious.

The modern theological development is characterized by the tendency to return to the very sources of theology. It led to the study of S. Scripture and traditions. These studies were indeed a great break-through of the traditional static theology of the manuals. The source studies enlightened the scholars to distinguish between what was essential in the Church and what was accidentally added to it in the course of time. This assessment paved the way for the reform of discipline, Christian life and doctrine.

The treatise on the Church was mainly dealing with the nature and function of the authority in the Church. The authority-centred theology was gradually revealing its stale juridicism and spiritual emptiness. The liturgical movement was another important development in the Catholic Church. The study of the writings of the Fathers and liturgical texts gave new insights into the spiritual dimensions of the Church. Theology itself is no more considered static or defensive but part of the living and dynamic life of the Church. Theology should

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19) I Cor. 12, 13

form part of the preaching of the word of God to the people of the time. It was natural that there arose the problem of integrating the new insights into the theological synthesis.

This theological development had its impact also on ecclesiology. Counter-reformation ecclesiology was accused of stale intellectualism. The speculative theology was suffering from the lack of life content. This defect was remedied by adding kerygmatic elements into theological thinking. Gradually there arose the question of the very purpose of theology. Is it merely to satisfy the intellectual inquisitiveness of man or to enlighten the people to face the living realities and challenges of their daily lives? Such a trend of thought had its own impact on understanding of the nature and mission of the Church.

## 5. Ecclesiological evolution of Vat. II

The Conciliar document on the Church known as *Lumen Gentium* is generally hailed as the most remarkable achievement of Vatican II. This document provides the basic principles upon which the other documents of Vatican II are built. One can observe different stages in the formulation of *Lumen Gentium*. There is no other document which has undergone so many changes as that on the Church. It reveals a substantial development in the understanding of the nature and mission of the Church. A brief analysis of this evolution may be quite helpful to appreciate the doctrinal development on the Church.

The first draft of this document was presented in the first session of the Council on 1st December 1962. It was prepared by the pre-conciliar commission *De Doctrina Fidei et Morum* and consisted of eleven chapters. The contents of this draft resemble the standard of the theological manuals used in the seminaries. The emphasis was more on the institutional and juridical aspects of the Church. The Fathers of the Council called it a product of the counter-reformation attitude. The societal aspect of the Church was given great emphasis while inner reality of the Church was not adequately pointed out. Another major defect of this draft was that the rôle of the hierarchy was given too much prominence while the rôle of the laity was almost neglected. The Fathers wanted a biblical and pastoral approach rather than a mere scholastic

and speculative exposition. In the light of these criticisms a second draft was prepared by the Theological Commission which consisted of four chapters.<sup>20</sup> 1. The Mystery of the Church. 2. The hierarchical constitution of the Church, especially the episcopate 3. The People of God, especially the laity. 4. The vocation to holiness in the Church. This draft was accepted as a basis for discussion though many modifications were proposed for its improvement. The third draft which was prepared before the third session incorporated in it the results of the debate of the second session while a fourth one was prepared with further modifications in the light of written submissions on the third draft. Finally the document *Lumen Gentium* was officially voted and promulgated on 21st of November 1964.

### Theology of *Lumen Gentium*

There is a four-dimensional inner structure around which this document is shaped. The first chapter deals with the mystery of the Church while in the second chapter its historical dimension (people of God) is given. The visible structure of the Church, i. e. leadership and community, forms the contents of the third and fourth chapters. The purpose of the community i. e. holiness of the members in general and as religious, is spotlighted in the fifth and sixth chapter. The last two chapters point out the goal of the Church and its communion with saints (heavenly Church and Our Lady).

*Lumen Gentium* focusses attention on the mystery aspect. God's plan is realized in history through the Church. The Trinitarian life hidden from eternity is now revealed by Christ to his people in order to make them sharers of this divine life. The Church is the sphere of this unity with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ has made them sharers of this eternal life of love and communion. The Church is established to foster this fellowship of love. Through Christ we are led to the fulness of divine life which is the source of all goodness and happiness. The chapter on the People of God is the historical manifestation of the divine plan. They are called to live the

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20) K. McNamara, (ed.) Vatican II, Constitution on the Church, Dublin, 1968, p. 52

Trinitarian life as God's people and as sacrament of unity and fellowship. The priestly, prophetic and royal dignity of the people is also pointed out. This visible community is guided by the successors in the apostolic office. The hierarchy is at the service of God's People as Christ came to serve and not to be served. The hierarchy and the people are to help each other for growing more and more in the Trinitarian life.

## 6. Vatican II complements Vatican I

We have already seen as the background how Vatican I was conducted and how abruptly it was ended. The Council succeeded in enacting only four out of the fifteen chapters dealing with the nature and structure of the Church.

Vatican II while dealing with the doctrine of the Church kept in mind the background of Vatican I and tried to complement it by focussing the attention on those topics which did not form part of the conciliar discussion in Vatican I. Hence the most important doctrinal development of *Lumen Gentium* is the third chapter dealing with the nature of the episcopal college. Besides, *Lumen Gentium* lays greater emphasis on the priestly role of the bishop than on the canonical powers and privileges attached to the episcopal office. According to LG the Bishops collectively constitute a stable body or college which has a collective responsibility for the entire church. The doctrine of collegiality means that "the bishops of the Catholic Church in union with the Pope, the bishop of Rome, constitute a body, a unity, a college which as body, is the heir of the body of the twelve, the apostles with Peter as their head, which Jesus made the foundation and columns of the Church".

In the light of the doctrine of collegiality the highly centralised governmental structure of the Roman Church which was shaped according to the monarchical pattern has to give way to a more decentralised system by which the collegial responsibility of the episcopal college for the entire church can be effectively expressed. The episcopal college is in right succession of the Apostolic college. The Pope is an inseparable element of the episcopal college. This collegiality of the bishops has to be collectively expressed. The synod of Bishops which was formed after the council is the 'small Council' consisting



of the representatives of the Bishops to discuss matters of universal importance for the Church. This synod will periodically meet and discuss and under the leadership of the Pope shall give guidance to the entire Church.

The episcopal collegiality and co-responsibility is the expression of the life of the entire Church. The teaching of the Council on priesthood is set within the wider context of the hierarchical ministry as a whole. The priests form one priesthood with the Bishop who in his turn forms one with the entire episcopate. In the local Churches the mystery of the Church is locally realized. The one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church is made locally present. It is also a eucharistic community united by the body of Christ. This unity is expressed by the *presbyterium*. The *Presbyterium* is represented by the Priests' senate which is supposed to be the effective expression of the collective responsibility of the people of God united under the guidance of their pastor.

Now, before concluding let us go on to consider some aspects of the crisis connected with the renewal of the Church.

### 1. Crisis of authority

Ecclesiologists and Church historians will undoubtedly notice a crisis in the exercise of authority in the Church. The clarifying process of the nature and role of authority in the Church is quite evident. It was clear in the various revisions of the draft of the document 'Lumen Gentium' of Vat. II. No other conciliar document has undergone so much substantial revision as the constitution on the Church. In the course of centuries the idea of Christian authority has undergone many unhealthy influences. The problem at present does not seem to be a question of the need for or denial of authority but a real enquiry to find out the genuine concept of authority which Jesus Christ wanted to be exercised in His Church.

*Exousia* is the Greek word normally used in the New Testament for authority.<sup>21</sup> It means lawful authority. The Latin

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21) Cfr. article of X. Koodapuzha, Nature of authority in the Church, *Jeevadhara*, 1976, pp. 330-31

equivalent is *potestas*. *Potestas* is different from *potentia* which means *sheer power*. *Exousia* does not mean *dominion over others*. It is fundamentally a service in love, which has its origin in the Trinity. Hence the *authoritative* commission of the apostles from Christ is in its origin Trinitarian "As the Father has sent me even so I send you.... Received the Holy Spirit...."<sup>22</sup> The Church as a sign of this Divine Communion of persons is to help men grow into the life of the Trinitarian Communion.

Christian authority is a stewardship. A steward does not possess or own authority. He administers it in the name of the person who has appointed him. The conferment of stewardship does not guarantee that all the steward's doings will be approved by his master. If he does not take the maximum care to maintain the interest of his master he may turn out to be an unfaithful steward. The steward has no right to act against the interest of his Lord. If he abuses his stewardship he acts against the very intention of the master. In the Church the ministers are "stewards of the mysteries of Christ".<sup>23</sup> They do not own it but only administer it.

A better understanding of the Christian concept of authority has brought with it a certain crisis. There is an increasing awareness of the fact that the authority in the Church is entirely different from the pagan authority according to which there are superiors and inferiors! Among the Christians all are brothers, and there are differences only in the form of service (1 Cor. 12: 4-12). This Biblical notion of authority has paved the way for a reassessment of the various ways in which authority is being exercised in the Church. It affects the canonical structure of the Church and also the constitutions and statutes of the various Religious Orders and societies. The source of authority is not to be conceived in vertical terms but in the horizontal dimension of the entire Church in which the Holy Spirit is operative. The Spirit of God acts among his people and the leadership cannot be conceived apart from the ecclesial body for which they are appointed servants. The source

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22) Jn 20, 21-22

23) I Cor. 4 1-2

of authority is divine but the manner in which it is administered is human. God became Man to teach us the sublime dignity of man. Hence the human persons who are adopted sons of God are the objects of the service of the Church. The Pastor and the sheep are of the same species, and the shepherd in the Church cannot play the role of the shepherd who tends the irrational sheep! Jesus has explicitly warned His disciples saying "It shall not be so among you, but whoever would be great among you must be your servant."<sup>24</sup> But the concept of Roman law and the New Testament concept of the law do not seem to mean the same!

## 2. Crisis in the catholicity of the Church

Catholic Church (*kata holon*) means the whole Church, the complete Church within which the individual Churches are united into one ecclesial reality. Catholicity demands openness to the other churches. A Church which exists in isolation is sectarian and hence it cannot be called catholic. Openness is necessary for maintaining the communion of churches is generally hailed as a remarkable achievement of Vatican II.

Catholicity includes not only doctrine, personnel, time and place but also the element of apostolicity. The apostles are the pillars of the Church and they were officially commissioned by our Lord to found Churches. They were the authentic and authoritative interpreters of the gospel. They presented the gospel of Christ in a way understandable to the people and established a way of life based on the values of the gospel. Their interpretation of Christ's teaching and the manner of life which they established have a normative value for the subsequent centuries. The Churches of the later centuries have to conform themselves to the standard which was already established by the apostle who founded their Church. This apostolic heritage of the individual churches enjoys a uniqueness when we deal with the catholicity of the Church. Such apostolic churches founded by the apostles enrich the universal Church by their contribution to the multi-dimensional aspects of the ecclesial life. The

ecclesial traditions of these ancient churches developed in entirely different socio-politico-cultural contexts.

In the course of centuries we see the various divisions which have taken place in the Church as a result of the doctrinal controversies. The various conflicts and the subsequent divisions were impoverishing the Churches. For example the final separation between the Roman Church and the Byzantine Church in 1054 did have a negative impact even on the catholicity of the Church. The East and the West were guided by their own traditions. This ecclesial separation paved the way for a unilateral development in the West as well as in the East. Now theologians have started discussing the problem of the ecumenicity of those ecumenical councils in which the ecclesial participation of the different individual churches was not quite satisfactory.

In such a strange situation Catholicity was sometimes identified with the Roman Church which does not seem to be ecclesiologically accurate. The Roman Church with the See of Peter is an individual church. In other words the Roman Church does not exhaust the entire heritage of the catholicity of the church. The heritage of the other Churches of apostolic origin have equal importance and hence the Vatican II declared that the Churches are equal and no Church can claim any kind of superiority over the other.<sup>25</sup> This question of catholicity is today in a state of crisis as the various Churches have not yet been fully open to the heritage of the other Churches of apostolic origin.

### 3. Crisis in the ecumenical relations

Vatican II was convoked for renewal and reunion. The Church which is renewed will be ripe for entering into ecclesial unity. Ecclesial unity does not mean to surrender the individuality and identity of one Church to another Church. On the contrary, ecclesial communion means genuine fellowship of the Churches accepting the same faith and sharing the same ecclesial life. The Secretariat for Christian unity has been promoting the various ecumenical relations. Ecumenical activities cannot be

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25) Decree on Oriental Churches art. 2 & 3.



regarded as the hobby of a few experts. The entire Catholic Church is fully involved in this movement. There is an increasing awareness that the division in the Church is a sin and that everybody is obliged to cooperate to remove this burden of sin. The time of accusations and useless polemics is gone for ever, and the people have started to think more of those elements which unite them with their fellow-Christians than of those which separate them!

Christian unity is not a mere return of the Churches but a common endeavour to meet on the common ground. The decree on Ecumenism acknowledges this movement among the various Churches as a movement guided by the Holy Spirit. Here we don't enter into the whole ecumenical problem. But we want to stress the fact that unity is different from uniformity. Unity is profound while uniformity is external and superficial. Every Christian has to acknowledge that a basic agreement is required in the fundamentals of Christian belief. But the problem remains on the exposition of fundamental faith. From facts of history we can point out that in many cases the idea of the Church as a communion of Churches was not adequately understood or appreciated. Such a situation will necessarily lead to shallow uniformity and blind imitation.

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# Towards Renewal in Religious Life – Problems and Orientations

Ever since Vatican Council II called for a renewal of religious life and the Holy See gave out definite directives for it, religious life in the Catholic Church has been in turmoil. To a certain extent the Council itself was responsible for the confusion, since the decree *Perfectae Caritatis* placed conflicting ideals, orientations and traditions side by side in a single scheme without resolving the differences. There have been in recent times ever so many divergent diagnoses of the malaise in religious communities, and long years of experimentation have only compounded the confusion and created an uncertainty about the future. A law under revision is a sort of vacation of the law creating an unhealthy vacuum. But the most fundamental of all reasons may be a certain conflict of religious ideologies and a lack of clarity about the specific scope each religious family should have in view.

## **Divergent and conflicting ideologies**

In all the ongoing discussions about religious life two divergent ideologies may be easily discerned, one placing the emphasis on the sanctification and self-fulfilment of the individual members of a religious community while the other throwing the accent on the special role the religious have in assisting the ministry of the Church.

1) The first view of religious life takes it an ongoing search for its own ideal never stopping in a stereotyped and absolute view of what it essentially is. It has to adapt itself to the constantly changing circumstances and needs of life and should not get stuck in the past.

2) Hence this perspective tends to deny or considerably diminish the differences between Christian life pure and simple

and religious life, since the goal of both is attainment of the perfection of charity and the fulfilment of one's baptismal commitment to Christ. Everything else can be only accidental and accessory to this primary goal.

3) In this pursuit of personal and communitarian perfection in Christian life great emphasis is placed on the human dimension, especially personal experience, psychology and sociology, in which areas growth is really possible.

4) Historically, religious life is not a part of the ministerial structure of the Church, but something started on the personal initiative of founding members who often, against existing structures, wanted to give effective witness to the life of the Church through the form of life they chose. Ecclesiastical authority only gave it a definite form and official approbation. Hence there is a certain need to keep the dependence on the ecclesiastical hierarchy at a minimum level both in teaching and in discipline in order to emphasize the independent function of the fraternal assembly in the Church.

5) For the same reason there is a move to drop or at least weaken the vows of obedience, which smacks too much of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and of poverty, which has lost its witnessing value in today's effort to remove poverty from the world. But greater emphasis is to be given to the vow of chastity and the reality of consecration to Christ. Poverty itself is interpreted as sharing of what one has with others, and availability to their service, and obedience as unmediated submission to the Father and constant listening to the Spirit in the community in an atmosphere of dialogue in taking decisions.

6) In this outlook not only are obsolete rules and traditions dropped and done away with, but also all specifics about the management of the daily life of individual members avoided, so as to permit a certain diversity and freedom in lifestyle.

7) In this perspective on religious life, the religious community is taken as a supportive group for the initiatives and efforts of individuals, and, therefore, greater emphasis is placed on

the sub-groups in which one works, plays and prays, than on the larger community.

8) Hence, apostolic activities on individual initiative get greater importance, though corporate activity is not excluded.

9) Sometimes the emphasis on the individual can become exaggerated allowing a great amount of freedom even in the types and modes of recreation and relaxation.

II. But in the other ideological perspective on religious life, emphasis is placed on the aspect of the religious state as a stable form of community life organized by the Church and consisting in the observance of the religious vows and definite rules approved by the ecclesiastical authority (cf. *Latin Code*, Can. 487, 488).

1) Hence it has an identifiable, stable core which everybody has to know and accept. Adaptation to the modern circumstances and needs can be admitted only in the changeable elements and not in the basic essence itself.

2) In this canonical or juridical perspective, though the religious have to be closer to the laity than at present the character of religious vocation as distinct from that of the ordinary Christian has to be clearly maintained.

3) The norms for renewal in religious life are drawn not principally from the psychological, sociological and experiential sources, but rather from the directives of the ecclesiastical Magisterium traced back in some manner to Scripture and Tradition.

4) As a form of life organized in its basic structure by the Church and with rules and constitutions approved by the ecclesiastical authority, the canonical status of the religious family as well as juridical powers of its superiors and councils is given great importance, and close relationship should be maintained with the ecclesiastical authorities especially in matters of doctrine and discipline.

5) In this canonical perspective the vow of obedience is of paramount importance, and poverty, in spite of all the modern



problems and paradoxes, is considered essential to religious life. Poverty is not mere sharing of goods and personal availability, but must include a certain amount of actual deprivation and especially dependence on the community and the superiors.

6) Obsolete rules and regulations and traditions have to be dropped, but there should be specific provisions concerning life-style and details of personal management to guarantee uniformity in the life of the organized community.

7) The religious community is taken as a supportive group for the members, but there is less emphasis on individual initiative and originality than on the community undertakings and projects.

8) In this outlook apostolic activities undertaken on the basis of personal charisms and individual initiative are considered an anomaly and hence greatly discouraged.

9) So, often there is the danger that personal talents and individual freedom get crushed in the process of conforming everyone to a faceless community.

Both these ideological perspectives are to a great extent theologically valid and can help to build up communities dedicated to give effective witness to the life of the Church. But today the crisis in religious life comes from a failure to distinguish between these conflicting ideologies, and from the presence in the same community of persons with divergent ideas about what is expected of them as religious. With the best of intentions they find themselves working at cross purposes and thus impeding the healthy apostolic orientation and effective functioning of the community,

### **Lack of idealism**

More dangerous than a conflict of ideologies is the dearth of any religious ideals in a great section of the members of religious congregations today, especially in India. Theology and, especially, ideologies on religious life are mostly imported from the West, and a good many religious do not have the compet-

ence or professional training for understanding and assimilating such theological thought, particularly because there is no unanimity among theologians themselves. Hence there is a general aversion among religious for anything smacking of abstract thinking or systematic theology. All they can understand and appreciate are practical concerns, considerations and consequences. So, today, psychological techniques and methods for exploiting group dynamics like group counselling, community building techniques, transactional analysis, endless dialogues and rap sessions which help the members to live and work together in community have won considerable popularity among religious. Though these techniques, on account of their novelty, hold great fascination for the uninitiated and show immediate results, they are only stop-gap manœuvres with no lasting value, for there is hardly any supernatural motivation behind them. Without a conscious realization of the ideals of faith and a firm and willing commitment to the supernatural goals and objectives of religious life, the religious have only purely human motives to fall back upon especially in times of strain and crisis. An aesthetic satisfaction in the successful fulfilment of one's tasks and duties, the approval and appreciation of the members of the community, the power and influence one wields through one's position in the community – these are often motives that keep together the members of a community working harmoniously for the common good.

Religious vocations have steadily declined in Western countries. But, if in India there is no appreciable fall in religious vocations, one of the major reasons for it is economic, particularly the lack of availability of other more attractive and challenging opportunities for young men and women aspiring for success in life.

On the other hand, an approach to religious life purely in spiritual terms without taking into account its human dimensions is equally disastrous. Often those who do not make a realistic assessment of the actual ideals and goals of religious life including its limitations, take it as something mysterious, wholly supernatural and other-worldly and fail to take into account the psychological and sociological factors integral to human existence. Those who ignore the psychological, sociolo-

gical, political and historical aspects of human existence easily become their victims. Those who fail to assess consciously and scientifically the dynamics of psychological and sociological interaction in community and make appropriate adjustments for their deviations and ambiguities are often unconsciously guided in their reactions to the community, its members, and the people they serve, by personal ambition, selfishness, prejudices, regional and factional rivalries and the like. Election to offices in religious communities is a typical example in this respect. It is supposed to be a prayerful communitarian search to discern the particular charisms of the members and to choose the appropriate persons who can give leadership to the community. But when such high idealism is lacking and actual situations are not taken into account, the elections in a religious community can sometimes turn into an ugly scene of political infighting, in which rivals are eliminated by subtle propaganda, and tactics objectionable even to political parties are used to ensure the election of one's favourites. This is the extreme consequence of the failure to recognize that even a religious community is a political entity.

### **An outdated ecclesiology**

A deeper root of the anachronistic look of some religious families is the type of ecclesiology behind them. A religious family is supposed to present to the world the image of the Church. But there was a time in the past when the Church was conceived and presented by some in the fashion of a sort of exclusive club, a society pure and simple with certain distinctive notes, with some definite conditions for admission into it and a sanctuary into which one could escape from the world. Though such an outlook has certain juridical advantages for defining the rights and privileges of those who are formally members of the visible organism of the Church, it does not do justice to the universal mission of the Church for the salvation of all men and the unity of the economy of human salvation. Hence Vatican II radically altered the approach to the self-image of the Church from that of a sanctuary to that of a sign and sacrament of salvation for all men. It is the people of God, the people whom God loves in Jesus Christ that means, in some manner, all men, saints and sinners, believers and non-believers

on their pilgrimage to their eternal home, their Father's house. The stress is laid not on the exclusive and distinctive notes of the institutional Church but on the different levels and degrees in which different men are related to Christ, at least by the universal call of the Father inviting all to salvation in the Son. This new vision of the pilgrim Church has not filtered down to the details of the life of the Church today, and those religious families preoccupied with their own historical identities and the distinctive traits of their traditions, rights and privileges, seem to exaggerate the institutional image of the Church.

Such religious communities with attention centered upon themselves, amassing material properties and other amenities as a source of collective security, appear as a sort of anomaly in the religious thought of today. In the past, when religion was defined as the sense of an awesome and fascinating mystery, convents with high walls and castle-like monasteries were treated with admiration and respect as signs of the sacred. But today, when religion is considered the transforming force that converts men from within to an experience of the common humanity of all men and endeavours to heal all wounds of separation and division, such exclusive institutions are a source of a feeling of alienation and a threat to peoples' very existence. Any closed and exclusive institution is felt to be an encroachment upon one's own totality.

## **The way to renewal**

**1. Vows without walls:** The first step in the renewal of religious life today is to regain a sense of the original meaning and scope of the institution in the Church. As everyone knows, religious life is not a part of the essential structure of the Church, nor is it clearly envisaged in the Bible. Religious life started in the Church as renewal movements led by men and women specially inspired by the Spirit of God to respond to certain specific needs of the Church and to give witness to the authentic inner life of the Church through a public commitment to the practice of the evangelical counsels. What was most evident in this initiative of the pioneers, then continued and expanded by their followers into their respective families and



traditions, was the charismatic call received by the founders and their whole-hearted commitment to the service of the people of God in the concrete socio-cultural and political situation. Though the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience were generally assumed as signs of their commitment, their content, scope, meaning and emphasis were slightly different according to the particular needs and concerns of the times. Only when, in the course of time, the urgency of the original call and the dynamism of the movement cooled, did the whole life get reified into legal definitions of the vows and prescriptions and rules which had the stability and continuity of the already established family primarily in view. Instead of being outward-oriented to the service of the Church and to witnessing to the word, they became inward-oriented for establishing and maintaining a stable and happy unity of members within the family. The vows instead of being functions of this service of witnessing, became interpreted as part of one's exclusive commitment to the community: chastity, an escape from "the lust of the eyes" and a renunciation of the small human family for the sake of the larger religious family; poverty, an act of dependence for all one's needs on the superior and community; and obedience, a submission of one's will to that of the superior, the representative of God. It has very little scope for the charisms of the Spirit like those that moved the founders to break with the *status quo* and to attempt new things for the Lord.

But the religious family internally organized on these lines of the juridical interpretation of the vows, is the dream-world of the canonist and of the administrator. Nothing in the life of the religious is left to chance or free choice, but every detail determined and regulated by rules and statutes so that the community functions like a well-trained army ready to act efficiently at the command of the appropriate superior. Sometimes the statutes of some religious institutes read like rules for some maximum-security prisons, where the authorities took care that the inmates did not get any time to think or plan anything by themselves. Administrators who have the smooth and efficient running of institutions primarily at heart, naturally cannot envision a renewal of any religious institute that would

take the members back to the chaotic conditions of their founding state. Hence, often renewal programmes are mostly cosmetic changes in the wording of rules and regulations without in any way affecting the entrenched and self-perpetuating institutional structure.

But true renewal of religious life can be achieved only if the artificially created walls are broken down and the momentum of the religious movement started by the founders is regained. This means religious vows without walls. The evangelical counsels should be understood in their original outward oriented meaning. Chastity has to be regarded as total commitment and consecration to Christ and to his Church. Religious poverty must be an identification in spirit and truth with the poor of the Lord, sharing what one is and has willingly with others, placing the matter of one's security in the providence of God. Obedience must be seen as an ongoing search for God's will and kingdom in this world.

This total commitment to the service of humanity is a discovery of one's own authentic humanity. Man comes out of nothing and his fragile existence is threatened from every side. Not only are the works of his own hands taken away from him, but also they sometimes turn against him to destroy him. The pollution of water and air owing to industrial expansion, accumulation of nuclear weapons and the ever-continuing warfare of humanity, all testify to the futility of human endeavour to solve man's own basic problems. As the European philosophers like Max Scheler and Edmund Husserl have shown, man is a problem unto himself. With all his talent and ingenuity man cannot solve the fundamental problems of his existence. Hence the only solution for the human problem is to turn to the one authentic humanity, the humanity of Jesus Christ, the God-made man, the sinless Son of God who emptied himself taking the form of a slave. The religious commitment in chastity is the total and unconditional surrender of one's humanity to Christ as the fulfilment of the human existence one received as a gift from God. Religious poverty is a proclamation of the mystery of Nazareth, the life Christ led there as a poor working man, the acknowledgment that the real man is not the rich,

educated and powerful one, but the common man who struggles to eke out a living by the sweat of his brow. Obedience is not simply a mechanical organization of tools and talents for the accomplishment of lifeless tasks but the effective building up of the body of Christ in true fellowship of persons obeying the will of the Father.

**2. Religious Life a Theology:** The goal of man according to the Greeks was to go beyond the fields of action and contemplation to the state of "theology", God-realization. For Christians theology is not merely the knowledge of the supreme good and beautiful, but the ongoing reflection on the Good that gives himself to man in faith. It is not simply the building up of a theoretical system of concepts and propositions but the credible discourse in human life and praxis of what one experiences in faith. In this sense religious life is an object-lesson in theology. It expresses, in a life of real sharing of what one has with others and caring for each other in true fellowship, the reason for the hope we have (I Pet. 3:15). It draws its basic data from the Sacred Scripture and the life of the Church and tries to interpret them in the context of present-day humanity in continuity with the past of history. It has a great capacity to bring together conflicting trends and interests in complementary relationship for the good of the members and of the whole Church, at the same time widening the spiritual horizon in terms of a supernatural anthropology. Religious life provides a system of thought and life that embraces dogma, morals, asceticism, mystical experience and pastoral care in a single living witness of faith that uses effectively all the tools of human communication.

Hence there is sound reasoning behind the plea that the religious should maintain a certain independence from the Church authorities, and should not make themselves simple helpers of the ecclesiastical Magisterium. The teaching and governing authority of the Church performs a function for the Church to guard the people of God from falling into error and to keep it on the right path of orthodoxy. But theology and religious life have a different function to perform, namely to give concrete expression to the inner life experience of the Church. Though these two functions are complementary, they are distinct and

demand distinct charisms of the Spirit. The religious, while rendering all possible help for the magisterial and administrative functions of the Church, should exercise a prophetic role, speaking forth boldly for the Word of God in actual life.

### **Conclusion: religious life a liturgy**

On the whole we can say that religious life seems to have a strange analogy with the Sacred Liturgy. This is not only because the religious houses place great emphasis on the appropriate celebration of liturgical functions and have the personnel and resources for conducting them properly. Like liturgy itself it is a complex organization of persons and materials, rites and ceremonies, traditions and actual situations, a multitude of minute details and an overarching plan and purpose. What makes a liturgical celebration is not the sundry materials like flowers, candles and incense, bread and wine, altar, vestments and sacred books, nor even their meticulous organization according to prescriptions, but the fellowship of living human beings who in full consciousness of their call commemorate and actualize the crucial events of the past and celebrate them in the present, proclaiming hope for the future. Liturgy without a meaningful participation of human beings becomes perverted and perverting superstition. So also religious life can die if its traditions and customs have no relevance for the present, and if the community does not achieve the active and willing collaboration of its members.

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# What has the Ecclesiology of Communion of Vatican II Meant for India ?

When Pope John XXIII summoned the Second Vatican Council, in his apostolic Constitution *Humanae Salutis* of 25th December 1961, he said :

It is a question of bringing the modern world into contact with the vivifying and perennial energies of the gospel, a world with its conquests in the technical and scientific fields, but which brings also the consequences of a temporal order, which some have wished to reorganize excluding God<sup>1</sup>.

in his opening address at the Council, the Pope sounded a very positive note as regards the developments in the modern world and pointed out that these new conditions have opened up new avenues to the Catholic apostolate. He distinguished between the substance of faith and the way in which it is presented<sup>2</sup>, a very important distinction indeed. It is the necessary postulate for any updating of theology and pastorals.

Vatican II can thus be characterized primarily as a Council, which started off with a determination to face the new frontier of the scientific and the cultural. Sociologists, like Houtart, point out that the Church today has surpassed the geographical frontier, since she is present in almost every geographical area of the world. But what is startlingly new is the cultural and technological frontier. The world is fast becoming a unity from a technological point of view, from the

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1) W. M. ABBOTT Ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (London, 1967), p. 703.

2) Cf. *ibid.*, p. 710-719, especially p. 714, 715.

point of view of scientific discoveries, of geographical distance and of communication. It was necessary to know this world<sup>3</sup>.

But to bring this world into contact with the gospel, as was the intention of Pope John needs more than merely having information about the modern world. It means also that the Church has to look at herself and to her ministry to see to what extent these require to be detached from the way in which they have been presented up to now.

It is true that facts and events are not themselves normative, in the sense that they unambiguously manifest God's will. But the factuality of events is unquestionable and this factuality is not culture-conditioned. In contrast to this, every articulation of doctrine is culture-conditioned and no one articulation or even all taken together can exhaust the mystery of God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ. Therefore, when the Church is confronted with the factuality of events, she has to take a fresh look at her formulated doctrines and accepted pastorale and ask whether these are plausible and comprehensible to a man caught up, as a matter of fact, in the events of today's world.

### **Ecclesiology, central to Vatican II**

In this context in which the Council met and in its effort to face the technologically and culturally new world, ecclesiology was a constant centre of unity of most of the themes treated, if not all. The Church gathered in council reflected on her own reality and on her relation to those who did not explicitly adhere to her. In this process of reflection, linked to the desire to speak a comprehensible world to the world of today in order to bring it into contact with the gospel, the Church opted to describe herself as "a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all mankind"<sup>4</sup>. This option marked a definite shift from a juridical ecclesiology

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3) Cf. F. HOUTART, *The Challenge to Change* (New York, 1964), p. 8-9.

4) LG 1.

to an ecclesiology of communion<sup>5</sup>. The shift does not mean that it denied the juridical dimension of the Church. The pilgrim Church which takes on the passing forms of this world in her institutions and in her sacraments and which is constantly prone to sin, will always need juridical norms. But the option of Vatican II was a decision as regards its priorities, when speaking to the world of today. The Church looked on as a kind of sacrament would be regarded less as a thing—static and objectivized, and more as life—dynamic, personal, subjective, which however respects the objective norms on which she is established. Thus the institutional and the juridical would be at the service of the vital and contribute towards growth and communion.

The communion envisaged by Vatican II has a twofold dimension: the one vertical, a participation in the life of the Trinity, which transforms men into a new creation; the other horizontal, which is a fruit and consequence of this participation and transformation, constituting men into one people, one family, one fellowship.

The option of the Council carried with it certain implications as regards her values. The Church for example, envisages herself as engaged in a search for answers to complex problems and confesses that she does not always have answers to these complex problems<sup>6</sup>. It meant opting for the means and help proper to the gospel<sup>7</sup>, appreciating the good that there is in rites and cultures which have not yet accepted the gospel<sup>8</sup>. Basically, it meant that the Church was opting for a new hierarchy of values and engaging in a search without fully knowing the details of the solution that would emerge. But it demanded a basic commitment of all those who were engaged in this search to Christ, who was the key to any solution. But, as is well known, even today—fifteen years after the close of

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5) Cf. A. ACERBI, *Da una ecclesiologia giuridica a una ecclesiologia di comunione: Analisi del passaggio nella elaborazione della Costituzione "Lumen Gentium"* (Bologna, 1975).

6) Cf. GS 3, 42.

7) Cf. GS 76.

8) Cf. LG 17, AG 9.

Vatican II — there are problems and difficulties connected with the influence of the teaching of the Council on the life of the Church<sup>9</sup>.

In spite of my very limited acquaintance with the situation in India, I would like to offer few reflections — some documented, others more personal — on the course that this process of change initiated by Vatican II has taken in India, and perhaps should take in the future.

### The ecclesiology of Vatican II in India

I find it rather interesting to indicate some of my observations on two aspects of this process of change, before offering some reflections — the one, the All India Seminar on the Church in India Today of 1969, and the others, some instances of the manner in which one or other issue pertaining to drawing out the implications of Vatican II was handled by the Catholic Bishops' Conference in India.

#### a) *The All India Seminar (1969):*

In India, a series of seminars held throughout the country climaxing in one with representatives from the entire country held in Bangalore, marked an important moment in the diffusion of the basic insights of Vatican II. In the orientation papers for this seminar, there was the clear warning that "It is the deep-rooted tendency of human nature to protect itself against the hard contact with reality"<sup>10</sup>. Quoting AG 10, it said that the clear demand was to enter realistically into the existing world and acknowledge the slowness of many Christians to accept the demands of the Christian vocation. "We have not yet developed the passion for social justice, which runs through the Council documents, through 'Populorum Progressio' etc. We have hardly developed the sense of Christian responsibility which is expect-

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9) Cf. for example, J. NEUNER, "Confrontation in the Church", *Vidyajyoti* 42 (1978). p. 527-268, especially in regard to India p. 262-265.

10) *All India Seminar on the Church in India Today, Bangalore. May 15-25, 1969: Orientation papers* (New Delhi, ) p. 28



ed of the layman in the Council decrees.”<sup>11</sup> The orientation papers dealt with various issues which pertained to the Church in India. But in the preliminary seminars before the one held in Bangalore, it is interesting to note that, the issues were faced with a certain introspective mentality, which fell short of the openness to the world and the spirit of searching for answers which characterized the Council documents. For example, in regard to the role of the Church in socio-economic activities, the felt need was to study and put into practice the social doctrine of the Church. Social work was considered to be especially the work of the laity.<sup>12</sup> Strangely, there is no mention of the need to change the unjust structures of society.

In regard to civic and political life, there was the slowly emerging realization that the Christian community should actively participate in politics. While speaking of the need for Catholics to work for national harmony, mention was made that the Church should see how her interests were affected.<sup>13</sup> In the consultation for priests, the resolutions, while citing GS 4 about the need to read the signs of the times, make recommendations which are more pertinent to the welfare of the clergy themselves than suggestions inspired by at least the necessity of facing up to the world as it was.<sup>14</sup> In general, one can say that in practically every section, an element of fear to change and/or self-interest is manifest. Furthermore, if one reads the summaries of the discussions and the orientation papers, one gets the impression that the basic points made in the orientation papers do not seem to have formed the back-

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11) *Ibid.*, p. 29-30.

12) Cf. *All India Seminar. Preparatory Seminars: An Assessment* (New Delhi, ? ), p. 318-354. A similar perspective is found before Vatican II. See: *CBCI: Report of the meetings of the working and standing committees Bangalore, Feb. 10-14, 1960*, p. 62-67.

13) Cf. *All India .... Preparatory*, p. 357-369.

14) Cf. *All India Seminar: The Church in India Today: Report on the National Consultation of the Pastoral Clergy: Poona, Jan. 4-8, 1969* (New Delhi, ? ), p. 155-160.

ground to the discussions and to the practical suggestions made.<sup>15</sup> This view seems to be collaborated by De Letter, who said that five years after the close of Vatican II, the Church was still in an unsettled situation—many uninterested in renewal and some only half-heartedly interested. His call was that the Church in India face the crisis and give up what was outdated.<sup>16</sup>

**b) CBCI meetings:**

If one were to read the reports of some of the CBCI general meetings, on the one hand, one finds very clear statements of Vatican II theology; on the other hand, one finds a certain hesitation in bringing this theology down to practice.

At the CBCI meeting in New Delhi in October 1966, the importance of liturgy and catechesis was stressed in no uncertain terms:

Given the prime importance of both liturgy and catechetics in the life of the Church, this conference solemnly declares it the pastoral policy of the Church in India to place the liturgical and catechetical apostolate at the very centre of its activities, giving them prime importance in its cares and pre-occupations. Thus only will all the efforts to better the social and cultural conditions of men, and the dialogue with those who do not as yet belong fully to the people of God find in the mystery of Christ, both the 'source and goal' of their efficacy.<sup>17</sup>

This was an excellent theological presentation of the interests and concerns of Vatican II. But the statements made officially and unofficially by certain members of the hierarchy as regards the implementation of these perspectives are also known. Hence

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15) One gets a similar impression reading: *Report of the General Meeting of CBCI Calcutta, Jan. 6-14, 1974* and comparing discussions with orientation papers.

16) Cf. P. DE LETTER, "After Vatican II: Renewal and Crisis in the Church", *Clergy Monthly* 34 (1970), p. 388-397.

17) Cited in D. S. AMALORPAVADASS Ed., *Post-Vatican Liturgical Renewal in India: 1963 December 1968*, (Bangalore, 1968), p. 5.

it is not surprising that in the decennial (1968-1977) index of *Vidyajyoti* one finds listed only one document of the CBCI, which deals with liturgical renewal. In fact, most decisions even as regards implementing the provisions of the Constitution on the liturgy, ultimately rested with individual bishops.<sup>18</sup> The rationale behind such an attitude, the CBCI explained, was that there was no tendency to impose any rigid uniformity or to refuse pastoral pluriformity. They "kept to a middle-of-the-road policy both with regard to the implementation of the general liturgical reform and the adaptation of the liturgy to the genius and culture of the country". They also emphasized the need for preparing the people by due pastoral consultation and adequate catechesis, following pastoral pedagogy and prudence.<sup>19</sup> But surveying the liturgical renewal up to 1971, Sister Clare and Father Archambeaud said, "One point seems clear for all. If external participation has been possible in more or less varying degrees, no one is fully satisfied with the inner feelings that should animate this movement".<sup>20</sup> Thus, one could perhaps say that, in spite of the option to make the juridical serve the fellowship and communion of the Church, the liturgical renewal in India was one wherein the juridical received primacy.<sup>21</sup>

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18) Cf. D. S. AMALORPAVADASS, "A few decisions of the CBCI: On the current liturgical renewal", *Word and Worship* 1(1967), p. 18 indicates that though the Bishops' Conference passed a resolution about use of the vernacular in the canon, each individual bishop had the freedom to use the possibility or not.

19) Cf. *Report of the General Meeting of the CBCI, Ernakulam Jan. 7-16, 1970*, p. 62-63.

20) SISTER CLARE - FR. G. ARCHAMBEAUD, "Liturgical renewal in India: Consolidated report of 72 ecclesiastical units: 1968-1971", *Word and Worship* 5(1972), p. 380, cf. p. 371-380.

21) The clarification given in 1974 about the Indian Anaphora is a juridical rather than a theological clarification. It said that it was thought that two thirds of those present and voting was considered sufficient; but that what was needed was two thirds of the entire conference. The matter was henceforth reserved to Rome, (Cf. *Report of the General Meeting of the CBCI, Calcutta, Jan. 6-14, 1974*, p. 107).

But still one cannot say that this problematic arose as a result of lack of knowledge of the theology of Vatican II. Responding to the orientation programme proposed by the follow-up committee of the All-India seminar, "specifically the bishops agreed to appoint in their diocese a person (if need be full time) or a team, who working chiefly through existing structures would carry the spirit of Vatican II to priests, religious and laity".<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps, in this situation, one could venture to say that if knowledge of Vatican II doctrine were the sole criterion of the impact of the Council, then the Church in India would rate high. But the Council through its theological options also by implication opted for a certain hierarchy of values and in its decision to search for solutions and not impose them, decided to take the factuality of events seriously. It is in this regard perhaps that there is the fear to change. Theology is relatively harmless and its area of real influence is limited. Changing the hierarchy of values based on that theology and facing up to the reality of facts is quite another matter. To me it is intriguing that the first time in a CBCI meeting was found a reference to the fact that often persons are victims of unjust structures and that there is need to strive, for a just society, to seek every means of healing these structures (meeting of 1978). Even here, there is the citation from Pope Paul's encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 36 and the added suggestion that committed laymen should move into fields where they can influence the change of structures.<sup>23</sup> But in the section just before this statement, it is said that Christian justice does not exhaust itself merely in winning just wages for the lowly paid, securing rights for the oppressed and pronouncing against an unjust society. It moves towards a fuller expression of love.<sup>24</sup>

The general impression that one has from this cursory review of the manner and attitude in which issues were handled at CBCI meetings was also one of a careful attempt to be faithful to doctrine, mixed with a fear to change according to

22) *Report ... Ernakulam* (cf. note 19 above), p. 154.

23) Cf. *Report of the General Meeting of the CBCI, Mangalore Jan. 9-17, 1978*, p. 81.

24) Cf. *id.*



the doctrine set forth. At all costs, there is the desire to remain "uninvolved".

### **An attempt to draw out the practical implications of Vatican II Ecclesiology for India**

What Pope John XXIII envisaged as a result of Vatican II was both a renewal of pastoral structures and a renewal of faith and Christian life.<sup>25</sup> But the Church at the Council was able to do this by re-formulating and giving greater emphasis to certain aspects of the context of faith in the face of the needs of the day. This, however, implied the need to change the pre-Vatican II value system or at least to modify it. What would this mean in practice?

#### *a) Doctrines at the service of communion and fellowship*

Doctrines not only serve as conceptual formulations of faith. They also form an institutional element in the Church. When Vatican II from many possible models opted to describe herself as a kind of sacrament and chose to look at the world from this viewpoint, this was not only a theological, but also a pastoral option. When the Church looks for example at India from this standpoint and considers the seeds of truth and the movements for unity found there already, one would logically have to say that the Church in India is a sign and instrument of this unity. A sign (in the sense of a sacramental sign) points to a reality and does not create the reality. As instrument, in the same context, one does not impose a pre-fabricated reality, but leads what already exists further into God's plan.

Unfortunately, perhaps in India, the dichotomy between knowledge of Vatican II doctrine and fear of working to realise its conclusions in practice can be explained in a perspective of doctrine looked at rather differently from the doctrine which serves as a sign and instrument of entering more fully into God's plan. Such a view would consider doctrine as an institutional element in the Church, which has to be maintained and supported for its own sake - simply as a constitutional element

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25) POPE JOHN XXIII, *Ad Petri Cathedram*, 29 June 1959, AS 51(1959), .Ap.511

of the Church. Thus, the primary concern would be to safeguard the conceptual content of doctrine, to see how it differs from and is "special" in regard to other existing realities and so on. As a consequence, the possibility of seeing the practical implication of this doctrine, and making doctrine witness to the Church as a sign and instrument of unity would not be primary. Hence we read rather pessimistic reflections on the Church's witness in Asia, such as:

Theologically speaking, the Church should be the the concrete realization of the harmony towards which discord is striving. But is it in fact that realization? Our young activists tend to say that in Asia, the Church as a "total institutional system" is not a "sacrament" of it that desires accord but rather (perhaps they exaggerate!) its countersign. And this verdict is given not primarily because of her internal divisions and the plurality of Christian denominations, but because, if considered historically in its structure and means of support, at least in her past and present, she is viewed as an instrument of rupture within the Asian communities, and as a continuing agent of the neo-colonialism and imperialism of the West. And these things our Asian peoples find intolerable.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps, such sentiments may be an over-statement of the situation prevalent in India. But comments such as the actual interventions of the Church in Kerala being "the belated attempts of a community with a medieval outlook to catch up with the demands of modern times"<sup>27</sup> have been made. It has also been said that it is interests rather than principles that have motivated the Church to intervene in politics. Whenever her interests seemed to be challenged, she took sides with other

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26) R. H. HARDAWIRYANA, *The growing Church: amid various religious and cultural traditions and contemporary ideologies: The ecumenical Task in Asia* (FABC Papers No. 14, Hong Kong, 1979), p. 10.

27) A. KALLUNKALPURAYIDOM, "The Involvement of the Kerala Church in Politics", *Jeevadhara* 1(1971), p. 61.

similar opportunistic groups or sought their cooperation and followed a course of action dictated merely by expedience.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, perhaps the first requirement in India should be an attempt to try to understand that doctrine is an institutional element of the Church at the service of the life of the community of believers. Hence, the need is to internalise the new values before institutionalising them. But always there should be an institutionalization with a built-in flexibility to allow for the possibility of change and renewal.<sup>29</sup>

### *b) The primacy of orthopraxis in Asia*

Since more often than not man cannot foresee the full consequences of his actions and of his options, there is the constant tendency to regress and try to retain the familiar *status quo*. At least one reason for such an attitude is the lack of appreciation of the fact that not only is God at the beginning of the Church, but that it is He who is at the ending of the Church and that it is He who carries the Church forward toward this ending where He will be all in all. As Vatican II has professed, despite its imperfections, the pilgrim Church has a genuine though imperfect holiness.<sup>30</sup> This should serve as an incentive to identify concrete albeit imperfect embodiments of God's presence and activity. The task of the Church in India would be to try to isolate such activity, and be a catalyst towards further activity in the same direction.

When Vinoba Bhave on the occasion of the Pope's visit to India made the following statement, he was underlining something of a programme for the Church in India:

I, for myself, can say on behalf of the whole of Indian culture that Christ is acceptable to India...

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28) Cf. M. KANJIRATHINKAL, "Christian Participation in Politics: A case study of Kerala Church's political involvement", *Jeevadhara* 6(1976), p. 146.

29) In a juridical ecclesiology, the norms would have primary importance. The possibility of renewal would be through disobedience to the law.

30) Cf. LG 48.

It is my claim that, to my knowledge, nowhere else has a collective experiment of Christ's teaching carried out on so extensive a scale as in India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. It is proved to be in our interest that God gave us the wisdom to accept the message of Christ<sup>31</sup>.

A. Pieris, while on the subject of Asia, points out that "spirituality, for instance, is not the practical conclusion of theology, but the radical involvement with the poor and the oppressed and is what creates theology. We know Jesus the Truth by following Jesus the Way<sup>32</sup>. In the early Church, faith in Jesus and his words led to a basic attitude on the part of individuals and communities. It was this attitude and behaviour in the face of the world of that day that led Christians to affirm their faith through doctrinal formulations. But unfortunately, this perspective seems to be lacking in the discussion and formulations of pastoral policy for India.

Perhaps this lack could be due to the carelessness on the part of those concerned to study the issues involved in any depth. But this would be to question the commitment of those concerned in their task, which would perhaps be at most an *argumentum ad hominem*. A more realistic reason for this lack may be the very theological formation which the pastors (and through their pastors, the laity) have received. Prior to Vatican II, the theology of St. Thomas complemented by European theology reigned supreme. Thomistic theology expresses itself through Aristotelian categories and assigns importance to the conceptual content of faith. But this theology alone is insufficient to give one a grasp of an ecclesiology of communion and fellowship, which of its nature need personalistic categories in order to be grasped. But these personalistic categories carry with it overtones of a negation of dogmatism and idealism. Thus, trying to assess the ecclesiology of communion with personalistic categories of

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31) Cited in S. J. SAMARTHA, *The Hindu Response to the unbound Christ* (Madras, 1974), p. 6.

32) A. PIERIS, "Towards an Asian theology of liberation: Some religio cultural guidelines", *Dialogue New Series* 6(1979), p. 45.



thought read through Thomist eyes, one is on the defensive and opts to keep to doctrinal orthodoxy as regards the content of faith. One believes in good faith that this is perfectly legitimate and the first step that is called for. In fact to do otherwise would be to opt for the annihilation of the Church as an institutional force.

Perhaps today the leaders of the Asian Church would do well to recall the words of Gandhi: "Most religious leaders I have known are politicians in disguise, while I, who wear the mask of a politician, am at heart a religious leader"<sup>33</sup>. For Gandhi, his very devotion to the Truth, drew him into politics. He says:

To see the universal and all pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation and yet in all humility that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means<sup>34</sup>.

In today's world one does not find religion an ordinary topic of conversation. It was different for example in the days of Gregory of Nyssa when the discussion, whether the Son was of the "same" substance or only of "like" substance as the Father, was heard in the ordinary course of commerce - buying bread and exchanging money<sup>35</sup>. Today, in such a situation, the discussion would be on the price of bread itself, and whether the controversy has had anything to do with the present price. It seems that Gandhi displayed this sensitivity and tried to situate his values in life. One finds it hard to distinguish where his doctrine ends and practice begins. Religious authority has an important role to play in this regard.

33) Cited in T. OHM, *Asia looks at Western Christianity* (Freiburg, 1959), p. 181.

34) Cited in M. A. AMALADOSS, "Gandhian spirituality", *Clergy Monthly* 33(1969), p. 201.

35) St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Or. de deitate Filii et Sp. S* = PG 46, 557.

As A. Pieris says, "The magisterial role in the Asian Church has to be earned by the Master's competence to mediate liberation. Authority makes no external claims. Authority is competence to communicate freedom. He who lacks competence uses power"<sup>35a</sup>. Such an authority would be creative and positive. It would be concerned with people and their real needs. While it does not renounce its task of safeguarding doctrinal orthodoxy, still this would be done in the realization that doctrines of yesterday stated in yesterday's language can be heretical today, if yesterday's words are given today's meanings. The task of authority would be that of preserving the faith, and also of translating and re-interpreting them for today, so that religion is not only truth formulated, but also truth lived and proclaimed through life itself. This would demand a confrontation with the world of today— not merely an emotional reaction to it or even merely an intellectual criticism of it. It would have to be sensitive understanding, critical appreciation and discriminating participation.

### c) *Implications for a renewal of faith*

If God lies at the beginning and end of the Church and of all human history, one should be able to identify, as stated earlier, embodiments of God's action in history and of man's surrender to Him. In the area of dialogue with non-Christians, this insight has been followed up. There seems to have been the effort to share the experience of faith in non-Christian religions by living together with them and by trying to study their experience of God as it has been.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps this trend augurs well for a more relevant mode of living out the implications of an ecclesiology of communion. As already stated, implicit in the option of expressing the reality of the Church as a sacrament, there lies a certain functionality as regards the institutional aspects of the Church. But one can also speak of a certain hierarchy of truth implied in this option.

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35 a) A. PIERIS, *art. cit.*, p. 49–50.

36) Cf. A. J. NAMBIAPARAMPIL, "Church in India—Dialogue in Progress", *Evangelizzazione e culture*, 3 Atti del Congresso internazionale scientifico di missiologia, Rome, 1979), p. 262–270

As regards non-Christians, Catholic theology is agreed that they are saved by implicit faith in Christ. It is also true that the implicit has meaning only in relation to the explicit. But, the question is: What is primary, the right of the Church to proclaim to the non-Christians the explicit, or the right of the non-Christian to know in his way and at his pace the full implications of the implicit which orders his life? It would seem to us that in the context of an ecclesiology of communion, the right of the non-Christian should take primacy and it is the task of the Church to respect this priority.

Respecting this priority would require that the Church speak to such people not in categories and figures which have already been formulated elsewhere, but in words, images and phrases, which correspond to his own modes of thought.<sup>37</sup> Hence, the need to listen to the situation in which such non-Christians in good faith really are, and letting ourselves be questioned by the depth of their commitment. It implies stressing not so much the uniqueness of Christianity as the universality of Christ, a theology confessing Christ rather than a confessional theology.

While it is true that there is no one identifiable reality which can be called "Indian" in a universal sense, there is perhaps a certain approach to reality, certain expectations of those who lay claim to authority, certain expressions of self-surrender to God, which can claim to be universal, at least *ut in pluribus*. These have still to be identified and harnessed for the proclamation of life and as issues that the Christians should use to examine their own life style. Thus, the process by which the implicit faith of the non-Christian is made more explicit must not be assessed so much in terms of whether it leads to external and explicit commitment to Christ through

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37) A. K. CHIRAPPANATH, "Gandhiji's great challenge", *Indian Missiological Review* 1(1979), p. 44-57 points out that the Church in India has very little receptivity, that Western life styles have been imposed on Indian Christians and many have failed to witness to Christ through their lives.

baptism,<sup>38</sup> as in terms of whether the man is allowed to develop what can be considered an identifiable feature of self-surrender in his situation and culture and respond to a similarly identifiable feature of God's self-communication to him. The Christian message will serve to make him conscious of formal error, but it will do so through the anthropological dimension of truth.

Basically, the same principles would hold for Christians—already baptized and somewhat catechized—but whose grasp of the content of Christian faith remains poor and whose commitment in life is perhaps mixed with superstition and error.

The task is indeed a great one. It needs the cooperation and commitment of the whole Church in India, not just of one sector of it. While the bishops are the leaders, it needs also deeply committed priests and laity. It would perhaps be helpful if the bishops were chosen from men who have been brought up in the area of their ministry and if as many priests as possible were also from the given area. Today the call is not so much for more information. Perhaps in India people are over-catechized, but they are certainly under evangelized. A new proclamation of the gospel is called for, so that people may be converted from their alienation (from their primary and secondary human communities) to enter more fully into God's Church as a sacrament of the union with God and the unity of the human race. The Spirit of God is never in a plan or strategy of action, but in a community of brothers, who are always striving to enter into greater fellowship with their God, who has called them into fellowship, and with their fellow men, with whom they are inextricably linked in the bonds of community. I have here tried to spell out some of the theological considerations that could lie at the basis of such a fellowship.

Kandy, Sri Lanka

Nihal Abeyasingha

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38) Congar points out that in the first three centuries of Christianity, though there is a strong polemic in the patristic writings against the practices of pagans, there are few examples of prayer for their conversion (Cf. Y. CONGAR, "Souci du salut des païens et conscience missionnaire dans le christianisme ostépostolique et preconstantinien" *Kyriakon* (Festschrift Johannes Quasten, Vol. 1, Munster, 1970), p. 4-6. LG 16 envisages non-Christians as those who have not yet received the gospel having real, albeit invisible, links with the Church.



# Public Opinion in the Church

Public opinion in the Church means nothing less than an authentic dialogue *within* the Church. This conversation is a must for the Church if, by it, we mean not a people well-settled in green pastures or beside flowing waters or still lakes, but rather a pilgrim people, ever marching as well as keeping together on the march toward that tremendous Mystery so near, nonetheless so far from us, individually as well as collectively.

The Church is described especially after Vatican II, as a pilgrim people,<sup>1</sup> which is a sacrament<sup>2</sup> of the Kingdom of God. The Church, therefore in the first place, is not some kind of super-state, with its own courts of law, diplomatic corps, pena system and so on.<sup>3</sup> It is neither.....

an organization nor even a hierarchy, and this is true irrespective of how great may be the saintliness or the total dedication of the people who constitute this hierarchy. The Church is above all *a certain way of being together* in the name of Jesus Christ for the purpose of listening to the voice of His Spirit<sup>4</sup>.

Positively speaking, therefore, the Church is a *Koinonia*, meaning an interpersonal fellowship for *diakonia* (service), *leitourgia* (worship) and *kerygma* (broadcasting of the Good News), in view of the eschatological Kingdom (the common brotherhood of man). This community of adult people, being pilgrim in nature<sup>5</sup>, is not already perfect, therefore, immutable, but *semper*

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1) Cf. Y. Congar "The Church: The People of God" in *The Church and Mankind* Vol. I., of *Concilium* (New York; Paulist Press, 1965) pp. 11-33.

2) LG: 1

3) Richard McBrien, *Who is a Catholic?* (Denville, New Jersey; Dimension Books, 1971), p. 14.

4) Emile Pin, S. J., "The Church as a Way of Being Together" in *Christus* No. 58 (1968 April), Paris, The Emphasis is mine.

5) LG. 48

*reformanda*, that is constantly to be updated.<sup>6</sup> It cannot, therefore, be identified with the Kingdom of God on earth, but rather tends towards it<sup>7</sup>; thus, it is not yet faultless or glorious. Historically the Church has been on the wrong side quite often. Its intolerance of disagreement, theological or secular, its failure to champion the cause of the voiceless and the powerless, its flirtation with wealth and power, its anti-sexual bias, to mention only a few, are the public scandals of Holy Mother the Church<sup>8</sup>.

Given these and other historical failings of the Church, it calls for dialogue not only to protect itself from these in future but also to restore its credibility especially with the critical 'sheep' in the Church.

Besides, dialogue is a right of every Church-member since 'to be in the Church is to be in relation'. Being a thread in the web of I-thou relationships, even the lowliest person has the full freedom to make his voice heard in the Church<sup>9</sup>. Hence let the laity be aware that public opinion in the Church is not a concession gratuitously granted by the hierarchy in tune with the times, as a kind gesture towards the weaker section of the Church. It is the fruit of the freedom that stems from the new fellowship of adults. That is why Pius XII has rightly pointed out that "something should be lacking in her life if she (the Church) had no public opinion. Both pastors ... and lay people would be to blame for this"<sup>10</sup>.

Public opinion presupposes critical thinking. But the common people in the Church, as you know, are generally naive, that is, uncritical. The "why" of it is beside the present consideration, though it would make an interesting study by itself. They are almost conditioned like Pavlov's dog to listen rather than to speak out, to follow than to lead. The Vatican II,

6) *Ibid* : 8 and *UR* : 6

7) *LG* : 5

8) John Arakkal, "The Dialectics of Belief and Life", *Jeevadhara* No. 31, (1976), pp. 56-74.

9) *PCISC, CeP* : 116

10) *AAS* : 42 (1950), p. 256

being aware of this unfortunate style of the domestic life of the Church, has warned those who exercise authority in the Church, to cultivate exchange of opinion and to "set up norms and conditions for this to take place"<sup>11</sup>.

In the early Church... the Church leaders... knew that the Spirit inhabits the Christian community and in their exercise of authority they remained closely linked with this community.<sup>12</sup>

The manna that is shared by the pilgrim people of God in its exodus is the Divine Revelation which is God's on-and-on self-communications in history. As man can respond to this communication only according to his growth and express it in a language close to his contemporary experience, at every stage an aggiornamento of doctrine, that is, a re-interpretation of the traditional teaching (dogma) in the light of the current focus obtained through dialogue becomes inevitable.

Hence dialogue is a necessity for the Church to make it relevant to the times and committed to its aim, namely, the building of the common brotherhood of man. Dialogue is capable of liberating the faith which in its doctrinal expressions is always of necessity time-bound as well as culture-conditioned.

Whenever people come together to solve their problems, enter into conversation and open themselves to one another and to their neighbours, the Holy Spirit is present, aiding them to avoid the traps into which they are tempted to fall and initiating them into new insight and fellowship<sup>13</sup>.

Church members are inter-subjective. That is why to understand themselves and so too their Church, they require dialogue:

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11) PCISC, *Op. cit.* cf SPUC, Reflections and Suggestions on Ecumenical Dialogue".

12) Quoted in *Problems of Authority*, John M. Todd, (Ed) Baltimore Helicon, 1962

13) Gregory Baum (1969), p. 113.

A community could not hope to understand itself unless it reflects within and upon itself. To do this internal communication between the different members and groups is essential.<sup>14</sup>

An authentic dialogue can take place only in an atmosphere of truth, justice, love and freedom<sup>15</sup>. Any claim for monopoly of truth including the Revelation, closes the door to a genuine dialogue. Hence public opinion in the Church demands genuine tolerance and appreciation of different theological tendencies even in matters purely doctrinal provided they are motivated by the achieving of the ecclesial objectives more responsibly. As unity is not uniformity "we must learn to understand", as Karl Rahner has said, "that tensions should not cancel out the unity of faith, the will to obedience, or, indeed, love"<sup>16</sup>.

As man is circumscribed by time and culture he cannot fully comprehend all the implications and attain the depth of any truth whether in a religious or a secular way. Hence both the reception and the expression of truth is unpredictably and constantly being actualized. So nobody can be infallible including the Pope<sup>17</sup> in the sense that their statements even on doctrine, whether *ex cathedra* or not, require no re-appraisal or updating

14) John Horgan, (1969), p. ix

15) To understand the connotations of these terms cf. W. Madtha (1964) pp. 166-69

16) Quoted by J. Horgan, (1969) p. 120.

17) Papal infallibility means nothing more than that the magisterium (the ecclesial teaching authority) will not fall into any irremediable error (cf. Greygor Baum, "the Magisterium in a Changing Church" in *Man as Man and Believer*; and in George A. Lindbeck, p. 103). Infallibility of the Church as a believing community, therefore, means only freedom from doctrinal error and not *access* to all and complete truth; it is the Church as a community which has been given the Spirit of truth and which cannot fundamentally err in its understanding of the heart of the Gospel. The Pope is infallible only insofar as he enumerates and proclaims the infallible faith of the whole Church, Catholic and non-Catholic. He is not infallible unto himself, in complete independence from the Church (cf. Richard McBrien-1971-p. 143).



for all the ages in the light of changing circumstances and renewed attention to the sources of faith and the ever-present revelation of the living God.

I would point out just a few instances of such profound changes as have occurred in the Church which have come about thanks to the new forms that the Church has received very often through secular sciences or movements like humanism.

The Second Vatican Council's declaration on the right of every person to religious freedom<sup>18</sup> is a corrective particularly of the Third Lateran Council (which threatened to ex-communicate Christians living with Jews), the 'holy' crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, and the attitudes of Pope Innocent III and of the Fourth Lateran Council against those who deviated from the doctrine of popish Church. The policy of Pope Nicholas V who sanctioned slavery by his Bull *Dum Diversas* of 1452 and the continual recognition as well as the practice of it by Innocent VIII and Paul III are not officially upheld now by the Church. The Church's siding with the haves so obviously evident in instances like the Peasant Revolt of 1524-25 in Germany has changed direction now chiefly in its doctrine and to certain degree in *praxis* too. The attitude towards sex (as something impure so rigidly upheld by Pius XII<sup>19</sup> mainly in connection with priestly celibacy) has been changed and valued positively in post-Vatican-II period. Marriage which was considered a "remedy for concupiscence"<sup>20</sup> is now considered at least a fulfilment of human personality. In the days when the Church considered procreation as the primary purpose of marriage, birth-control especially the practice of contraception had no place in its teaching and guidance. Now even Roman Catholic Communion encourages contraception through the use of the unfertile period<sup>21</sup>.

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18) *DH*: 2

19) "Sacra Virginitas", *AAS*, 42, 1954

20) cf *CJC*, c. 1013

21) "The self-contradiction involved in the permission of the deliberate use of the unfertile period with a view to avoiding conception and the prohibition of medical or mechanical means of contraception as unnatural is in fact" too glaring and has not got consensus in the Church as I feel. cf. John Arakkal (1976), p. 70; and Podimattam, in *Jeevadhara*, 24, (1974), pp. 480-88.

Besides these peripheral, nonetheless, important changes, in the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church we may note a few more, what I call core-changes, that have occurred after Vatican II. For example, the traditional monopolistic Roman Catholic insists on:

- (a) the Church as the sole avenue to God: "extra ecclesiam nulla salus".
- (b) Truth inside and error outside the Church.
- (c) the complete and exhaustive identification of the Church of Christ with the Roman Communion, and
- (d) special gift of the Holy Spirit to the Hierarchy as individuals.

These claims are now being forgone or, in different degrees, relaxed at least in theory<sup>22</sup>. Consequently, the whole dogmatic

22) The following admissions prove this statement:

- a) Secular means of grace : *LG* : 16
- b) Non-Christian religions can mediate some knowledge and experience of God : *ibid*: 16 & 17 *NA* : 2; *AGD* : 9,21; *DV* : 3, 14; *LG* : 16, 17.
- c) The Church of Christ "subsists in the Roman Catholic Communion" *LG* : 8; *UR* : 5, 15.
- d) The Church is collegial; *LG* : 22-23. Vat-II speaks of the collegiality only of the hierarchy in an explicit manner. A number of theologians contend that it involves its application to the relation of hierarchy and laity. Cf. C. Moller and Y. Congar in *Vatican II : an Interfaith Appraisal*, Ed. J. H. Miller (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966) p. 133 and p. 248; and J. Ratzinger, "The Pastoral Implications of Episcopal Collegiality", in *The Church and Mankind* Vol. I of *Concilium* (New York : Paulist Press, 1965) pp. 39-67. Note *PCISC* : 116 naturally makes us to think that the whole people of God is collegially structured and the use of the term "people of God" corroborates the collegiality of the entire Church.

attitude – ‘believe it because I tell you so, and you can always trust me’ – has lost its credibility among Christians as among others<sup>23</sup>.

If we admit that doctrine is relative as it is conditioned by the culture in which it is formulated and the problems of the Church to which it responds<sup>24</sup>, then the need for dialogue within the Church can never be overstressed, not only to make the Church open to the on-going revelation of God<sup>25</sup> especially through “the signs of the times” but chiefly to produce a widening agreement of a doctrinal consensus prior to its official pronouncement.

Sustained, systematized, constructive, public opinion is not a natural product in any community, much less in the Church, notoriously known till recent times for its authoritative monologue. An authentic and fruitful dialogue requires well-planned training. In the past the Church government did not pay much attention to it especially at the parish level.

Had the official Church trained the Christian masses for a sustained dialogue within the Church, the people, living or dying in the slums, in the mines, on the foot paths, in the wombs of unmarried mothers, in the disproportionately large families with slender means, under exploitation and subservience of every kind inside and / or outside the Church and finally people who cannot afford to live humanly, safe from the snatching claws of death, would have *mattered* to the Church prior to non-Christian (not necessarily un-Christian) humanists. The time, energy and planning that usually precede the sentimental piety expressed through multifarious and very often competitive and novel forms of devotions would have been channelized more towards the current and important issues in life such as personal growth, expanding responsibility, transformation of society and promo-

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23) David L. Edwards (1973), p. 26

24) Gregory Baum (1969), p. 34

25) The dynamic concept of revelation relativizes the doctrine as a witness of the Church to the progressively self-revealing God at different periods of her history. Cf. *ibid.*

tion of universal brotherhood<sup>26</sup>. In brief, the Church-leaders would have thrown themselves with greater commitment into the struggles of our time for a better society, and the regular Church-goers and shrine-visitors would have given more time to social service in their neighbourhood including the not-uncommon ecclesiastical injustices, bickerings and feuds in and from the (parish) priest's house.

The formation of councils at the parish and diocesan levels for the faithful (obviously without excluding the clergy unless they prove to be unfaithful) will be a great help in forming public opinion in the Church. These councils must be authentic forums not only for discussion of faith and morals in new light that is shed by "the signs of the time", the liturgical life suited to the spirit, climate and culture of the times and social responsibilities relevant to the times and existing needs, but also for responsible participation in the Church government.

The councils should not be pre-planned techniques of the pastors just to keep people happy. If everything that is discussed there is ignored *in toto*, is it not better to resign from such pseudo-councils as the Jesuit David Stanley did some time back from the Pontifical Commission, for the reason mentioned above, in connection with the question of the ordination of women in the Church? The council members must have the courage even to correct their pastors if it is felt that they are going astray in their vocation of Kingdom-oriented service. If truth, justice, love and freedom are violated by their authorities, they must be able to say what Robert Grosseteste did in his famous letter to the Pope: "*filialiter obedienter non obedio, contradico et rebello*"<sup>27</sup>.

In this context it should be remembered that the laity do not simply assist the hierarchy or the clergy but participate, in the responsibilities of the very saving mission of Christ Himself:<sup>28</sup>

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26) *ibid*, p. 2

27) Cf. Brian Tierney "Grosseteste, and the Theory of Papal Sovereignty" in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 6, (1956).

28) *LG.*: 33



Lay participation in government is desirable, not only in the election of members of the hierarchy as was done in the early Church, but directly as regular delegates to regional and ecumenical councils. The Church is essentially a community of love and freedom and it must maximize consensus and freedom, that is, collegiality, by the very way in which it is structured<sup>29</sup>.

The mission of the Church is not the sole and primary responsibility of the clergy but of the entire people of God, basically through their baptism and confirmation.<sup>30</sup> All – the laity, the religious, and the clergy – are responsible for the work of the Church. Hence all must share in the formulation of policies in the framing of laws and in all decision-making processes; the senates of priests and parish / diocesan councils should not remain purely as advisory bodies. If the Church is by nature a *Koinonia* it cannot be a monarchical structure with the Pope / bishop / parish priest at the top of the pyramid on their respective levels. It has to maximize collegiality. If in practice these councils have become just tools in the hands of power-maniacs and monarchical-Church-officials, it is the bounden duty of critical men to take proper measures to set things right.

Any collegiality in the Church implies that the members should have critical awareness of social and theological facts. Even if we unwarrantingly assume that social awareness may be obtained to a large extent by committed living in one's milieu what about the theological awareness? At this juncture let me ask bluntly some of the fundamental questions:-

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29) Lindbeck, p. 88, for the elaborate treatment of this subject Cf. Hans Küng, *Structures of the Church* (New York): Thomas Nelson & Sons 1964

30) Cf. *LG.* : 30 & 33. In this connection I would like to request you to understand and treat sacraments as celebrations of Christian responsibilities rather than magical actions. Hence the necessity of administering them to adults and not to happy-go-lucky boys, much less to infants! Cf. John Baptist Walker, OFM, (1970) pp. 86-101.

Is Christian theology a sacrosanct branch of knowledge reserved only to the ecclesiastical brahmins, traditionally known as clerics<sup>31</sup> whether they be secular or regular? Is the scheduled class of church men known as the laity debarred from a full-time study of theology, especially in India, a land notorious the world over for its caste system? If not what are the facilities accruing to the laity to acquire a higher theological education and thus equip themselves as informed participants ready for ecclesial intra-dialogue? What percentage of Church finances are set apart at the diocesan level for the training of the laity in theology or, to use the words of Vatican II, for creating conditions for public opinion to take place? Moran has rightly observed that the intelligent and dedicated layman on whom the burden of the future primarily rests can still get practically no financial help at all in the expensive process of becoming competent in this (theological) field.<sup>32</sup>

In this context, I feel that the Church in India can at least make an effort, to start with, to create a theological climate. As spade-work the Church authorities should start without further delay Christian corners in the libraries of secular institutions like the universities and similar centres of higher learning. The establishment of chairs of Christian theology with the co-operation of university authorities is a practical way for the bishops at least to show the minimum regard for the decrees of Vatican II and an opportunity to learn how to fight against the

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31) The clerics (*clerici*) form a class in the Church with its own privileges, immunities, dress, titles, duties, etc. They were considered as *litterati* as they could understand Latin and therefore could read and write. The laity, in comparison with them were considered (as if not now?) as *idiotae illiterati*. Theologically, however, (though not in practice), the whole laity (*laos*) "people of God" is clergy (*clerus*), that is sharers of Christ. Cf. Hans Küng (1973) p. 385-87.

32. Gabriel Moran (1970), p. 35

evils of atheism, and to learn from the heads of other religious faiths which were thought to be in error, like Jainism, Veera-saivism, Brahmanism, etc. As part of the inculturation drive of the post-Vatican-II Church, if such facilities are provided through the co-operation of secular institutions, theological training can be made available to the people, chiefly the Christian laity who are interested in and have the capacity for it. Thus the Church will be able to create an atmosphere necessary to cultivate public opinion, so vital, almost a "*conditio sine qua non*", for the authentic functioning of the Church of Christ the universal, unless we would like to preserve it as a massive monument to Caesar of Rome.

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# Social Doctrine or Social Praxis?

## An analysis from the ecclesiological perspective

1. It is exactly hundred years from the beginning of the papacy of Leo XIII in 1878 to the death of Paul VI in 1978. A quick survey of this one century shows that it is a period of the so-called great social encyclicals such as *Rerum Novarum* (1891), *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), *Mater et Magistra* (1961), *Pacem in Terris* (1963) and *Populorum Progressio* (1967). The primary aim of a social encyclical is not to define a dogma. A social encyclical belongs, however, to the ordinary teaching function of the Popes who deal with problems which are closely connected with man's activities in the social, political and economic fields. Though the Church has no competence "in matters of techniques, for which she has neither the equipment nor the mission"<sup>1</sup>, the social encyclicals indicate the great concern of the Church in matters of vital importance for man's well-being. Yet, in the last one hundred years of social teaching of the different Popes, two distinct outlooks or world-views can be traced.<sup>2</sup>

2. From Leo XIII to Pius XII there is a kind of pessimistic outlook with regard to the problems of this world. This depressive mood is mainly inherited from the nineteenth century triumphalistic ecclesiology which seemed to regard the world with chauvinism and suspicion: man strayed from the right path; he is a slave to sin; Church has the divine mission of interpreting the moral laws; true solution to the social problems is always the solution from the Church, not from the secular world. In

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1) Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno* (London: C. T. S., 1960), no. 41

2) For the anthropological aspect of the social teaching of the Church, see T. Vellilamthadam, *Man and Social Problems* (Kottayam: Oriental Institute Publications, 1977); also L Ryaln, "Church and Politics. The last 25 years", *The Furrow*, 30, 1 (1979), pp. 5-7.



contrast to this, with Pope John begins an optimistic outlook towards modern culture and civilization. His social encyclicals are addressed to "all men of good will". In his exultant mood, Pope John invites all men to cooperate in building better future for mankind. Pope Paul inherits this open-minded approach and the theology of the Second Vatican Council, though he still shows in his writings certain signs of melancholy, apprehension and hesitation. He vacillates between Pius XII, his mentor, and John XXIII, his predecessor.

Both these divergent outlooks have, however, the same ecclesiological background. In fact, this peculiar situation is derived from the prevalent ecclesiological set-up in the sense that the Church in the course of centuries meant exclusively the ecclesiastical authority (Popes, bishops and clergy) instead of the Church as the people of God.<sup>3</sup> In the former case the Church already arrives at the interpretation of society and its intricate problems before applying the social doctrine to the actual social situation. In the latter case where Church means the entire people of God, Church does not have a sphere of activity distinct from the sphere of the actual social situation. A disheartening element in the social doctrine of the Church is that she speaks from above: "One of the most enduring sources of aggression against the Church's social teaching lies in the presentation of this teaching as a 'pre-fabricated' social model too facilely deduced from the Gospel or from certain conception of natural law".<sup>4</sup> The social doctrine thus loses not only its contact with the realities of daily life but also its vitality.

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3) About the nature of the Church, see X. Koodapuzha, "The structural evolution in the Church" *Jeevadhara*, 41 (1971), pp. 315-32; J. B. Chethimattam, "The local Church is the Catholic Church", *Ibid*, pp. 333-40; M. Vellanickal, "Christian Freedom and the local Churches", *Ibid.*, pp. 341-60; E. R. Hambye, "Images of the Church through centuries", *Ibid*, 22 (1974), pp. 293-310; X. Koodapuzha, "Nature of authority in the Church", *Ibid.*, 34 (1976), pp. 329-42; M. Vellanickal, "Ministry in the Gospels", *Biblehashyam* 2, 4 (1976), pp. 253-66

4) R. Heckel, "On the actuality of the Church's social doctrine and practice", *Lumen Vitae* 33, 1 (1978), p. 61

3. For specific historical, ideological and ecclesiological reasons, Church's social doctrine was destined to remain a social doctrine. It has not changed into an effective social praxis, aiming at the transformation of the structures both of the Church and of society. It is an historical fact that the Church as an institution cannot "make the structures evolve"<sup>5</sup> as Paul VI would have wished, for in this perspective the Church has become a part of the structure of the established reality principle<sup>6</sup>. Being situated inside the established reality principle, she fails to reckon with the repressive powers of these structures. Without a proper understanding of the established reality principle the Church's pious exhortations asking the individual to become 'the principal agent'<sup>7</sup> would produce no results. A change of the structures by the individual as the principal agent must be effectuated in the Church as a people of God and the Church as a communion of local Churches. Therefore only a radical break with the existing ecclesiological set up can lead to the change from social doctrine to social praxis.

4. Let me give an example for this kind of freezing of the social doctrine under the present ecclesiological set-up. Pope Leo XIII was a man of keen observation and of acute philosophical insight and he was able to formulate many historically significant idea of *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, in which he has dared to outline the basic rights of the proletarian class. He has advocated among other things the introduction of the concept of a just wage:

We now approach a subject of great importance, and one in respect of which, if extremes are to be avoided, right notions are absolutely necessary. Wages, as we are told, are regulated by free consent, and therefore the employer, when he pays what was agreed upon, has done his part and seemingly is not called upon to do anything beyond. The only way,

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5) Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, no. 50

6) For the concept of the reality principle, see T. Vellilamthadam, *Tomorrow's Society. Marcuse and Freud on Civilization* (Kottayam: Oriental Institute Publications, 1978).

7) Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, no. 15.

it is said, in which injustice might occur would be if the master refused to pay the whole of the wages, or if the workman should not complete the work undertaken; such cases the State should intervene, to see that each obtains his due; but not under any other circumstances.

To this kind of argument a fair-minded man will not easily or entirely assent: it is not complete, for there are important considerations which it leaves out of account altogether. To labour is to exert oneself for the sake of procuring what is necessary for the various purposes of life, and chief of all for self-preservation. In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread (Gen. 3:19). Hence a man's labour necessarily bears two notes or character. First of all, it is *personal*, inasmuch as the force which acts is bound up with the personality and is the exclusive property of him who acts, and, further, was given to him for his advantage. Secondly, man's labour is *necessary*; for without the result of labour a man cannot live; and self-preservation is a law of nature, which it is wrong to disobey. Now, were we to consider labour merely in so far as it is *personal*, doubtless it would be within the workman's right to accept any rate of wages whatsoever; for in the same way as he is free to work or not, so is he free to accept a small wage or even none at all. But our conclusion must be very different if together with the personal element in a man's work we consider the fact that work is also necessary for him to live: these two aspects of his work are separable in thought, but not in reality. The preservation of life is the bounden duty of one and all, and to be wanting therein is a crime. It necessarily follows that each one has a natural right to procure what is required in order to live; and the poor can procure that in no other way than by what they can earn through their work. Let the working man and the employer make free agreements, and in particular let them agree freely as to

the wages; nevertheless, there underlies a dictate of natural justice more imperious and ancient than any bargain between man and man, namely, that wages ought not to be insufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved wage-earner. If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accept harder conditions because an employer or contractor will afford no better, he is made the victim of force and injustice.<sup>8</sup>

I have quoted this text extensively, because it gave a very important message to the Christians many decades ago. But its implementation is yet to be done. Have the various institutions of the Church (as mentioned, for example, in *Populorum Progressio*, no. 12) implemented the ideas put forward by *Rerum Novarum* in 1891? What is the situation now even after almost a century? Will these institutions act up to these lofty ideas of the *Rerum Novarum* in the near future? Local Churches especially in the developing countries have to go a long way to understand the worn-out ecclesiology of the developed countries and to implement the social doctrine. It is unfortunate that social doctrine of the Church remains still a doctrine. It has not entered the arena of praxis. I have mentioned only the case of the non-implementation of the idea of the just wage in the Church institutions. This example, however, is indicative of the smugness of the Church as an institution immersed in the established reality principle.

5. There is no doubt that the Church has contributed much to promote human progress: "Her missionaries have built not only churches but also hostels and hospitals, schools and universities. Teaching the local populations the means of deriving the best advantages from their natural resources, missionaries have often protected them from the greed of foreigners"<sup>9</sup> and "in many a region they were among the pioneers in material progress as well as in cultural advancement".<sup>10</sup>

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8) *Rerum Novarum*, no. 34

9) *Populorum progressio*, no. 12.

10) *Ibid.* If we examine the nineteenth and twentieth century history of Kerala, we see that the influence of Christian



6. The basic problem in the context of a social praxis is: Where do the Church (-structures) stand in relation to the whole society (structures)? In other words, the problem today is centred not so much on the particular issues as on the society as a whole. For that, the present ecclesiological set-up is not only not apt for an effective social praxis but also in the long run harmful, for it ignores the whole issue.

Paul VI has a good grip of the problem when he states that "it is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustice and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and by effective action"<sup>11</sup>. It is through this effective action - social praxis - that individuals arrive at realizing the social doctrine of the Church. This involves the change of structure both of the Church and of society. "The Church invites all Christians to take up the double task of inspiring and of innovating, in order to make structures evolve, so as to adapt them to the real needs of today".<sup>12</sup> This in turn involves the knowledge that the powerlessness of the social doctrine of the Church stems, to a certain extent, from the fact that the Church was gradually relegated to the realm of the impersonal institution which has become an entity of its own. Only of late, the idea of a Church consisting

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missionaries was significant in bringing about social consciousness and subsequent social reforms in the various strata of society, especially in the lower classes. It is an undoubted fact that Christian message, values and morals proved to be a catalyst for social change. This is evident in the case of the Nadar Rebellion of 1858, demanding the right of Nadar women to cover their breasts, which had been forbidden by state law not only for Nadars but also for Izhavas and all other outcasts. Another example is the long agitations among the lower caste Hindus to have the right to enter public temples along with the higher caste Hindus. Cf. K. Kochukrishnan Nadar, *Nadar Charitram* (Kanjiramkulam: 1956) pp. 186 ff; M. O. Joseph, "Keralavum Christian Missionarimarum", *History on the March*, pp. 159 ff. Also C. K. Pullapilly, "The Izhavas of Kerala and their historical struggle for acceptance in the Hindu society", in B. L. Smith, *Religion and Social Conflict in South Asia*, (Leiden: 1976); pp. 32-33, 42.

11. *Octogesima Adventens*, no., 48.

12) *Ibid.*, no. 50

of living members began to take shape. "The subject and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person".<sup>13</sup> Pope John already spoke of it when he affirmed that "individual men are necessarily the foundation, cause, and end of all social institutions".<sup>14</sup>

7. There are some doubts about the Church's basic understanding of society. It is always the basic understanding of society that underlies the diagnosis of social problems and their solutions. Are the social problems merely moral problems? If the individual is changed, will then society, which consists of individuals, change? *Populorum Progressio* speaks of the responsibility of each person. He is seen as the principal agent of his own development: "In the design of God, every man is called upon to develop and fulfil himself, for every life is a vocation. At birth, everyone is granted, in germ, a set of aptitudes and qualities for him to bring to fruition. Their coming to maturity, which will be the result of education received from the environment and personal efforts, will allow each man to direct himself towards the destiny intended for him by his Creator. Endowed with intelligence and freedom, he is responsible for his fulfilment as he is for his salvation. He is aided, or sometimes impeded, by those who educate him and those with whom he lives, but each one remains, whatever be these influences affecting him, the principal agent of his own success or failure. By the unaided effort of his own intelligence and his will, each man can grow in humanity, can enhance his personal worth, can become more a person".<sup>15</sup> How far is he individual free in the modern society? How far is he responsible for his actions in the repressive established reality principle? How strong is the grip of the existing socio-political structures of the modern world? If they are repressive, how can they be changed through the social teaching of the Church? In order to help the individual "to make structures evolve", the Church must first free herself from her own structures. A renewed inner structure is a pre-condition for the authentic social praxis.

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13) *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 25.

14) *Mater et Magistra*, no. 219. Already Pope alluded to this significant fact. Cf. *The Pope Speaks*, 4, 4 (1958) p. 488 and 3, 2 (1956), p. 243-

15) *Populorum Progressio*, no. 15.

## BULLETIN

# Fourteen Years after Vatican II What have We Achieved ?

Vatican Council II is an epoch of tremendous significance for the Catholic Church and perhaps a momentous event for the world in the 20th century. It was an unprecedented global celebration of faith and a vivid expression of that faith in reference to the actual problems of man today. The decisions and declarations of the Council were intended to produce a deep and long-lasting transformation in the life and attitudes of all men, especially of Christians. Such changes, however, do not happen all at once but only over a long period of time, though the initial impact and the momentum of change are considerable factors in achieving a healthy transformation of individuals and institutions within a reasonable period of time. Hence a brief examination of what has been actually accomplished in the fourteen years after Vatican II will be helpful in assessing our growth and development.

### I. What was accomplished at the Council

As Hans Küng says, the Holy spirit does not act as *deus ex machina* at Councils. What has not been theologically prepared for a Council is not normally settled at the Council. Hence what happened at Vatican II was the fruit of hard work through a long period of time, especially a theological reflection in dialogue with Protestantism focussing attention on the questions it raised. Therefore clear conclusions were reached in the areas of ecumenical concern, especially those emphasised by the Reformation. The importance of the Bible for worship; theology and the whole life of the Church; the need for an active, simplified and more compact people's Mass in the vernacular; a theoretical and practical revaluation of the laity as the people of God and the universal priesthood; a certain decentralization and adaptation of the Church to the various nations; recognition of other

Christian communities as ecclesial communities or Churches; the demand for an ecumenical attitude and practical cooperation with other Christians; the acknowledgement of a Catholic share in the guilt of schisms in the Church: these were some of the fruits of such theological preparation. Though they were primarily the immediate concerns of the Western Church, they have also a general relevance for the whole Church today.

But there were other vital areas in which, for lack of adequate theological preparation, little was done in the Council. The Council has hardly two paragraphs on the youth movement, that too a condescending statement added at the last moment (*Apost. Actuosit* § 12). The document on the Non Christians does not reflect the sophisticated scholarship in the area of comparative religions today, and shows how far Catholic theology lags behind in the matter. Theological part of the decree on the Missions (*Ad Gentes*) had to be prepared in haste and is not properly integrated to the practical programmes proposed. Even the document on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), though a bold, new step, is very much an arm-chair theologian's vision of the World and does not reflect the scientific sensibility of sociologists, psychologists, economists and political scientists who have the specific mission to sacralize the world. Hence a Church like that of India, removed from the concerns of the Western World, cannot look for, in the documents of Vatican II, the answers to all its problems. What Vatican II presents is a model in creative thinking and an invitation to face the real problems of man and society with imagination and inventiveness in the light of faith.

## II. Organization for renewal

In the matter of organization of the Church the Indian Church is undoubtedly ahead of its counterpart in many other countries. Immediately after the close of Vatican II, the Bishops' Conference of India set about planning for an All-India Seminar on the Church in India Today. Preparatory seminars for it were held in many parishes and in every diocese and in house of ecclesiastical studies; there were further fourteen Regional Seminars. The findings and suggestions were pooled, organized, and printed for the benefit of the participants of the National Seminar. The



Seminar was finally held at Dharmaram College, Bangalore, from the Feast of the Ascension on 15th May to the Feast of Pentecost on 25th May 1969, attended by almost all the Bishops and representatives of the clergy and laity, the participants totalling about six hundred. This seminar was a national celebration to conscientize the people on various aspects of Church life. The Bishops' Conference set up various episcopal commissions to initiate and encourage appropriate activities for renewal in areas like those of the Bible, Liturgy and Catechetics, of Dialogue with non-Christians and Youth leadership and of guidance. National centres also were set up to train leaders and encourage activities in the different fields. There is also a National Advisory Council with representatives from the clergy, religious and laity to advise the bishops on various aspects of the life of the Church.

But we cannot say that progress proportionate to this feverish organizational activity has been realized in the Indian Church. The reason for this is that all this organizational set-up is just to help the hierarchy which is very conservative in outlook. Hence often the appeal to the authority of the Council is simply to confirm the old order of things.

1) Thus, in spite of all the efforts to create a new awareness concerning the liturgy, foster theological thinking and encourage active participation of the faithful in the Mass, much has not been accomplished on the parish level beyond the vernacularisation of liturgical texts. All efforts to indianize the worship forms and introduce new Eucharistic prayers suited to the different occasions and moods of the Indian people have been effectively thwarted by stringent obstructive regulations from above, and the prejudice, resistance and opposition of the laity.

2) Similarly, though India is the land of religions and religious Scriptures, since our Biblical scholarship is derived completely from the West, there has been very little effort to look at the Word of God through the reflective attitude of Indian tradition and the methods and approaches of Scriptural interpretation traditional to India.

3) Though Vatican Council II laid great stress on the role of the layman in the Church, which is presented as the people of God, very little change has been made in the organizational set-up of the Church. The Bishops' continue to be primarily fund-raisers and administrators and very seldom really appear as the spiritual Fathers of the Christian community presiding over the Eucharistic assembly. This example of the Bishops' is copied on a smaller scale by the parish priests in the parish community. There is very little hope that this pattern will change in the near future.

4) The spiritual life of the people continues to be fed, as before, by religious practices and devotions rather than by an intelligent realization of the mystery of salvation presented in the Bible and the liturgy. Even those who made some attempt to introduce the people to the celebration of the Divine Office have now reverted to the old Miraculous Medal novenas, devotions to St. Antony and the like, since these are more popular with the masses. In fact, because of the failure to educate the people in real Christian spirituality, there is a spiritual vacuum created in the minds of the people with the abandonment of devotions like the rosary and the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

5) The age of triumphalism is not yet over in the Indian Church. Big institutions, massive buildings alongside the shanties and huts of the poor people continue to be the hallmark of the Catholic Church in India. Hence instead of appearing as institutions built for the service of the people by their sacrifice Catholic institutions have an alien aspect. Social problems of poverty and racial inequality have not sufficiently provoked the Church's concern and we cannot say that the Church is really and truly committed to the uplift of the common man.

### **III. Actual achievements**

In spite of this apparent absence of tangible results in the efforts for the renewal of the Indian Church, we have to admit that there has been a great deal of real progress in the attitude, outlook and ideas of people in various fields, and this change of heart will sooner or later yield real fruit in the spiritual growth of the Church.

## 1. Liturgy

In the life of the Church the really vital factor is the liturgy, where changes can occur only slowly and in depth. The great deal of resistance felt in making even necessary changes in the liturgy is understandable. For as Margaret Mead has said, "it is the essence of ritual that those who participate in it have participated before.....changes inevitably upset one: throw one out of that semi-automatic type of behaviour which is only partly conscious and they project the participant into too great a consciousness" (Margaret Mead, "Ritual and social Crisis", *The Roots of Ritual*, ed. James, Notre Dame University Press, pp. 91-92.) This is the reason why people fight changes in ritual more fiercely than they fight changes in anything else. But still, liturgy has definitely lost its traditional immobility. As Margaret Mead herself says, "we tend to underestimate the extent to which ritual, as it becomes increasingly archaic, alienates people from their religion, from their society, and from their family. This is perhaps, one of the reasons why men have sought for universality, and have relied so heavily on very simple things in ritual, for instance, fire and water, on the one hand, and, on the other, the body—the one absolutely reliable cross cultural reference we can use" (l. c. p. 95). People have realized that liturgical rules are not absolute, magical prescriptions but directives for achieving a communitarian celebration of worship. The ideal of liturgical worship is not uttering age-old formalized prayer with a long face. Its core is "feast", and "play", playful and poetic activity. It combines with prayer theatrical action and aesthetic experience. In order to realize the good of the world through the existential reality of the Church, liturgy must enter into a struggle with itself, that is with its received traditions, till we reach the origin, principle, and meaning of liturgical symbolism. With this change in attitude in the minds especially of educated people, we shall sooner or later, willingly or unwillingly drop many past practices. We have already shed, to a great extent, fasts, compulsion under mortal sin to attend Sunday Mass, the rhythm of village life in seasonal feasts, and in brief all dogmatism. As for the authentic liturgical tradition we are in a better position than the former liturgists, on account of the progress already made by the Church, the accumulated experience of the saints, and especially the better-developed tools of research. Any liturgical reform, of whatever order it be, can have only a provisional validity. It will not be definitive, but must be constantly challenged.

What is more important is that today, in spite of all the rapid changes and uncertainties, there is a real deepening of spirituality. Ritual structure and specific spirituality are two aspects of the liturgy. When the structure was exaggerated into a quasi-magical absolute, spirituality was almost forgotten. With the recent loosening of structure great deal of parasitic elements, duplications and incoherences have been shed and there has developed a better vision of the economy of salvation celebrated in the liturgy.

## 2. New vision on the Bible

There is a similar widening of perspective regarding the Word of God on account of the encouragement provided by Vatican II. The Bible is no longer considered a mechanical record of what God said and did, the very words uttered by Christ and a faithful chronicle of his sermons and miracles. Hence it is not taken as an oracle. Though written under the inspiration of God it is a truly human book, and it has to be understood in the human context. Inerrancy is claimed by the Council only regarding those truths which God willed to be included in the Bible for the sake of our salvation. What these truths are cannot be automatically decided, but have to be found out by true scholarly investigation. Hence the help of Biblical Scholarship is called for to realize the spiritual message of the Word of God.

This instead of diminishing the reverence for the Bible brings a true understanding of the Word of God who speaks to man through the human Word, through human history, human culture and human psychology. The Son of God became man in a particular culture and he discoursed on the mysteries of God through the idioms and peculiarities of that culture. The Apostles who were witnesses of that Christ event were human beings conditioned by their culture and, when they communicated their experience, they were responding to the actual needs and moods of the peoples to whom they were conveying their message. Hence one has to study carefully the cultural context, historical situation and what is known as the "hermeneutical cycle" to find out what the inspired writers actually intended to communicate. The Word of the Bible goes beyond this hermeneutical cycle since it has an objective validity and ineffable meaning which even the evangelists and human messengers could not fully grasp.

Hence Biblical scholarship and the scientific tools of Biblical interpretation are not a luxury earmarked for those who



have time and talent for them, but part of the communitarian effort of the Church to discover the will of God for man in the present world situation. In this perspective the charism of Biblical inspiration is not God's gift to an isolated individual but the divine guidance of the community itself. Thus the old controversy between Catholics and Protestants, whether divine Revelation is in Scripture alone or in both Scripture and Tradition, has lost its point today, since even in a scholarly Biblical approach they are interpenetrating factors within the wider framework of the experience of a believing community that reverently listens to the Word of God and confidently announces it.

### 3. Integral perspective on salvation

Another area in which great advance has been made since Vatican II is the conception of salvation itself. Vatican II has indicated that salvation is not an escape from this world into some supernatural sanctuary symbolized by the Church, but rather an intimate union with God in this world itself which is an expression of the will of the Father, a realization of the mystery of the Incarnation in Jesus Christ and the experience of the Spirit of Christ who is active in his members. In its document on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) it has suggested that this work of salvation is a gathering-up of humanity with its joys and sorrows, fears and hopes in Christ through the Spirit leading it towards the Father. This new orientation was taken up by the South American theologians who developed their Liberation Theology emphasizing the fact that liberation of man is not of his soul alone but of the whole man, including his economic and socio-political freedom. The same theme was taken up by the Black theologians of North America and Africa who insisted that man's true liberation includes also freedom of racial exploitation, and that even today Yahweh is leading his people from captivity to freedom.

These new developments with the immense volume of literature they produced have brought to focus a new dimension of salvation itself. It is not primarily a vertical process liberating man from material creation to reach God. God is always present in his creation, more intimate to it than its own interior. The real block in man's salvation on the horizontal plane, is his lack of proper openness to the coordinates of his own existence. These include man's attitude to the material world, the economic conditions of his life, his responsibility to nature and ecology to keep it healthy and habitable for humanity, his openness to and recognition of other persons, and the proper balance and

use of socio-political structures and institutions. Hence the immediate goal of salvation is not escaping from this world or contemplating God, but making this world truly the Kingdom of God, hospitable for all men to live in. The Kingdom of heaven shall be the extension of God's true Kingdom on earth.

#### 4. A new ecclesiology

Even in the area of Ecclesiology new orientations have been developed after Vatican II. Theologians and Biblical scholars realized that the conception of the Mystical Body though essentially correct contained some misconceptions. It gave a very abstract, vague and idealistic conception of the Church as the Body of Christ. For St. Paul the Body of Christ was the Eucharist, the physical body of Christ, and the local Church that partook of the body of Christ at the Eucharist celebrated under the leadership of the Bishop was the concrete presentation of the Body of Christ, and the universal Church is the communion of such local Churches. Hence Vatican II quietly corrected the misconception by stating that the Mystical Body of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church, that means, is existentially realised in the visible Church. But a special preference was shown for the term people of God. A discussion of the conditions for membership in the Church was avoided in order to avoid the impression of the Church being a sort of closed club. Instead emphasis was placed on the different ways in which people belonged to Christ as it were in concentric circles. This new approach to the existential reality of the Church provides a wider and more comprehensive view of her in the salvation of humanity. The Church is not an abstract idea but a concrete existential reality: It exists in space and time. Hence the people of God in a particular place are all the people God loves there, that means not only those who are baptized, recognize the ecclesiastical authorities, receive the sacraments and thus belong to the visible organism of the Church, but all the people there who belong to Christ in some manner. This implies that the Church has to be the sacrament of man's intimate union with God and the symbol of salvation for all men. The Church is the symbol of salvation not by remaining outside the community of the people in isolation from them but by identifying herself with them as the true leaven in the mass, to make them gradually the true people of God, the people that manifest the realization of the will of God.

But to be a manifestation of the will of God the Church has to change the appearance of being the Church of the rich nations of Europe and America and show that it is the Church also of the poor, the locus of the conflict between the developed

nations and the third world countries. What is at stake is the credibility and lived unity of the Church. It must change from an overadapted Church to a Church of true discipleship to Christ, from being a "Church for the people" to a radical "Church of the people". It should not appear merely as "a" way to individual and moral perfection, but Christ's way to the Father. Its discipleship must not be one of pure inwardness, but an exclusively regulative idea for the socio-political community of man today. This requires that the ecclesiastical authority instead of being based merely on juridical-administrative competence should be based on real religious competence. A transition must be effected from a leadership which "has" authority to one that "is" authority.

### Conclusion

Though Vatican II did not solve all problems it opened out new perspectives that have led to new theological thinking in several vital areas. They are felt especially in the areas of Liturgy, the Bible, the question of salvation and the role and relevance of the Church. They have produced insights that have transformed the outlook and attitudes of people today. If these are properly taken into account in the life of the Church they can achieve a radical transformation in the life of the people today.

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## Book Review

Jean Daniélou, *Et qui est mon prochain? Mémoires*, Paris (Stock) 1974, 250 pp.

If printed letters had not been democratized and if printed civilization had not lost its sensitivity to the symbolic power of calligraphy, I would simply have written: JEAN DANIELOU with refined and loving strokes; *Le Père Daniéluo* in more subtle ideograms, indicating that I also mean 'le jésuite Daniélou'; and finally, *Cardinal Daniélou*, in more ordinary script - and stopped at that. But as we apparently need everything to be spelt out, not realizing that explication does not always enhance intelligi-



bility, I will have to 'clarify' this image of the three Daniélous, though the dark of night is just as real as the clarity of day. But this is a book review wherein I am to share my view of the book (and not other things) with the reader.

*Et qui est mon prochain?* was apparently dictated, once Daniélou could be persuaded to 'write' his memories, but his sudden death prevented a revision of the manuscript. The repetitions, overstatements and spontaneous expressions all allow us to discover and follow the three Daniélous, making the book extraordinarily alive. Neither the ponderous language of the politician nor the prudent verbiage of the clergyman comes through, but the blunt, sincere and straightforward talk of the human being.

The Man Danielou was an extraordinary figure: "a free Man", as he describes himself. He was born in 1905 into the very heart of French society: his father was twice minister, his maternal grandfather a general deceased in Tonkin; his mother, one of the first women to receive 'l'agregation de lettres' in 1903, was a great educator and spiritual person, as well as foundress of several institutions. Practically all the names of the Paris of his time appear in close relation with the young Jean: Cocteau, Mauriac, Sartre, de Gandillac, Marcel, Gilson, Lossky, Hyppolite, Massignon, Du Bos, Green, Emmanuel, the Maritains, Berdiaev, Lacroix, de Gaulle, Madaule, Diop, Tillich, Jung, Peuch, Marrou, Mounier, Daniel Rops, Eliade, Corbin, La Pira, Cullmann, J. Chevalier, and later Bouyer, von Balthasar, De Lubac, Teilhard and Paul VI among many others all mentioned with such a casual elegance that it cannot be called mere name-dropping.

Until 1929 when he entered the jesuit novitiate, Jean was omnipresent in Paris, which to the French was France, and to many Europeans, the world. Literature was his main nourishment and action his outlet. The ideal of his entire life was to reach a balance between action and contemplation, but as he himself says, he was more a contemplative than a militant: 'engagement' yes, but not to the point of sacrificing the intellectual side. He regrets that a man like Mounier, for instance, sacrificed his philosophical talents for an active commitment, or as he says, left "la pensée spéculative au profit d'une pensée engagée". He does not say whether the first director of *Esprit* would have agreed with the distinction. Interestingly enough, Fr. Tilliette made the same loving reproach in his fraternal contribution to



to the Bulletin of the 'Cercle Saint Jean-Baptiste', which Daniélou founded.<sup>1</sup>

Daniélou is clear, transparent, uncompromisingly defending his positions in an almost cartesian way – although in the whole book he quotes Pascal several times, Descartes not even once: He plays in the arena of the intellect. The Man Danielou was a friend to everyone, but a deep conviction that there is a human layer untouched by strong intellectual and spiritual disagreements allowed him to be blunt and outspoken – and occasioned him more than one incident. For him 'l'esprit de géométrie' had little to do with 'l'ordre de la charité', to quote Pascal. He was an optimist who believed in joy and was convinced that 'we overlook a number of sources of joy'. His "life's framework (was) the vast world".

But he could not go on all his life with "the great holidays", as he calls the cultural period in France before the Wall Street depression. Mauriac and others encouraged him to follow his vocation. He describes the intellectual atmosphere of the jesuit theologate at Fourviere in Lyons at the time of his theological studies until 1939, and gives the genesis and gist of most of the numerous books he wrote as professor at 'L'Institut Catholique' during the next twenty-five years. In spite of intense intellectual activity he remained in close contact with students and young people. Criticism arose when he was consecrated bishop, to the effect that a bishop has to have people for whom he is pastor, to which he responds in the book that his people were 'le peuple des jeunes'. The title of the chapter describing his life after 1929 is appropriately "A Son of Saint Ignatius". He was everywhere – on TV dialoguing with Garaudy, in the pages of *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde*, in circles, conferences; and after 1962, first an expert in the Council, then Cardinal. "Le combat dans l'Eglise" is the title of the third period of his life. He takes it seriously, claiming that his fundamental positions have not changed, yet disavowing the label 'integrist' (a sort of fundamentalist) that he was sometimes charged with. He was very much concerned with the internal crisis of the Church, with the degeneration of intelligence (and intelligentsia). A Man of the dialectical dialogue at its best, he would not accept the dialogical one, as I once experienced. That is, he did not want to accept the possibility of changing a stand,

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1) *Axes* VII, 1/2 (Oct. – Dec. 1974, Jan. 1975) pp. 89 sq. The entire issue of almost 200 pages is worth reading for an idea of the 'rayonnement' of Card. Danielou.

a personal conviction, in the event of being 'convinced' (i. e., defeated) by one with another view.

Danielou describes himself as a "churchman" first of all, or perhaps one should say a man of the Church, "un home d'Eglise". He makes a fascinating comparison of John XXIII and Paul VI, asserting that if the order of succession had been reversed, Paul would have been the Man of openness and change and John the Man of discipline, conservator of fundamentals. His view of the internal crisis of the Church, which he admits touches the very foundations of Christianity, is principally structured by a scheme wherein changeable things encounter immutable principles. He confesses several times that he is not a philosopher and that he abhors any system, even synthesis. Understandably enough he does not ask himself who decides what is negotiable and what is not, or rather which interpretation can be considered legitimate and which not.

We may sympathize with the young director of the "Maison de Jeunesse" of the 'Society of Saint Paul' in Paris, in close touch with the people; or with the brilliant and active scholar and publisher of the second period of his life; or with the theologian of the Church, open to modernity but concerned lest tradition be broken. Yet as he himself sees it, perhaps the principal tie between the Man, the Jesuit and the Cardinal is Danielou the Priest. Certainly when this aspect was touched, he always reacted in extra-ordinary ways - in view of which I would also interpret, in spite of all its ambivalence, the surprising way in which he left this world. Or as Gregory of Nyssa (in Danielou's own translation) said of Abraham leaving Ur in Chaldea: "It is precisely because he was going towards an unknown destiny that he knew that he was on the right path".

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